

# RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE AND OTHER PAPERS

*Edited by*  
N. S. S. Raman  
Professor of Philosophy

&

Kedar Nath Mishra  
Reader in Philosophy

*With a Foreword by*  
Ram Shankar Misra  
Mālavīya Professor of Comparative Religion and  
Head of the Department of Philosophy

DEPARTMENT OF PHILOSOPHY  
BANARAS HINDU UNIVERSITY  
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## FOREWORD

The question concerning the meaning of religious language has assumed a considerable importance during the last few decades and has presented a formidable challenge to the theologians and philosophers of religion. Some recent and contemporary philosophers have made a searching analysis of the various aspects of this problem and have arrived at different and often diametrically opposed views concerning the meaning of religious language and the function and truth of religion itself. But this work has so far been taken up mainly by the philosophers and theologians of the West. It does not seem to have made any appreciable impact on the philosophers of this country, though the signs of a growing interest in this live issue are visible here and there. The reason of the apathy on the part of philosophers and thinkers of India towards the issue of religious language is understandable. The foundations of religion, its basic tenets and beliefs have not so far been questioned with that ruthlessness and iconoclastic spirit in this country as it is witnessed in the West. So we do not find any particular zeal and earnestness in the philosophical circles of this country to adopt either aggressive or defensive postures in respect of religion and the allied issues.

The present work comprises papers which were presented in an all-India Seminar organized by the Banaras Hindu University on "Religious Language" in March 1974. It is also enriched by some special papers contributed by some members of staff of the Department of Philosophy of this University. It also contains a valuable and learned introduction by Professor N. S. S. Raman who has taken great pains in editing it.

The problems concerning religious language have been studied so far mainly in the light of Judaic-Christian tradition. I believe that the question of the factual character of religious assertions can be studied in a more rational and fruitful way in the light of Indian religions which lay supreme emphasis on



knowledge and experience, variously characterised as *Parā Vidyā*, *Jñāna*, *Prajñā*, *Bodhi*, *Aparokṣānubhūti* etc. This emphasis on knowledge is not much in evidence in the Judaic-Christian tradition which puts absolute reliance on the revelation which is imparted to man from the Beyond. The present volume cannot claim to have brought this issue into clear focus, though some attempt has been made in that direction. It is hoped that it will stimulate Indian philosophers and thinkers to study the problems relating to religious language and religion itself in the perspective of Indian religions, specially Hinduism and Buddhism.

I hope scholars of philosophy and religion will find this volume refreshing and useful.

*Banaras Hindu University*

15th March, 1979

*R. S. Misra*



## INTRODUCTION

The attitude of the philosopher of religion may be said to have changed during the last hundred years. During my student days, I distinctly remember the fascination which a book like Pringle-Pattison's *Idea of God in Recent Philosophy* had for us. I also remember reading William James' *Varieties of Religious Experience* with a great deal of enthusiasm. Some of these great classics were based on the famous Gifford lectures on 'Natural Theology' delivered in the Scottish universities. Whether these lectures still receive the same intellectual response or not is for us in this country, very difficult to say, but the way the English-speaking circles have taken to linguistic analysis and have applied it to the analysis of religious language is suggestive of the new tendency to ignore the traditional approach to the study of religions. Philosophers appear to be less interested now in the study of religious *experience* and more enthusiastic about the language in which such experience is expressed. There are also those who examine statements concerning religious objects (e.g. God) which we make as philosophers or as ordinary men. In spite of the so-called "principle of empirical verification" being bandied about so frequently by the new philosophers, religious statements continue to be made, and I do not know why the analytical philosopher is not so outspoken as to call these statements nonsensical. On the contrary, enquiries are made about the meaningfulness of the religious statements.

It would therefore be unfair to dismiss problems of philosophy of religion as pseudo-problems, because they, like the metaphysical problems are expressed in 'unverifiable' terms. Some linguistic analysts could not pick up any courage, or to put it more mildly were hesitant to apply the same principles of linguistic analysis which they applied to metaphysical statements, to religious, ethical or poetic statements. It became increasingly recognized that these activities did not all pose the same type of problems. Hence the attention of



the linguistic analysts was turned towards understanding these special problems, and to analyse the religious, moral or aesthetic statements in a new light. For instance, symbolic utterances and mythical language could not be analysed with the same cold logic that analytical philosophers apply to metaphysical statements. Again, a distinction must be made between *religious* and *theological* statements. For example, there is a difference between utterances of a person like Sri Ramakrishna and a professor of theology or of philosophy of religion talking about the ontological argument for the existence of God. Even at the level of Western intellectual history, one finds a wide divergence between the languages of Meister Eckhart and St. Thomas Aquinas. Hence one would doubt the validity of some analytical philosophers speaking of religious language, subsuming under it various types of religious expressions. From this point of view it would be absurd to subject the Upaniṣadic statements to an acute logical analysis. The analytical philosopher sometimes admits, like R. M. Hare, that there are many things we do with words, each different from the other ; thus the scientific use of words would be different from their use in a moral situation or in a religious context. In our view, even in the religious context, words have different kinds of uses. The differences arise not merely due to one's special outlook or rather to what Hare has called 'blik's' but essentially to factors which are non-logical and even irrational in character. The language of symbols, parables, and metaphors is a case in point. We cannot talk about 'facts' in their case, and cannot in any case, apply cold logic in order to verify their validity. We need different kinds of framework to understand them all. A detailed study of religious symbolism, which a philosopher like Paul Tillich would suggest (making all religions symbolic in character), would be a good starting-point, but does not cover the entire range of religious symbolism.

In recent years, the importance of hermeneutics has been emphasized. Hermeneutics if properly understood, should



allow for different types and ways of expressing religious consciousness ; a proper procedure or rather proper procedures have to be evolved for interpreting various kinds of utterances. In fact, if as Whitehead has remarked (though in a different context), religion is what one does with one's solitude, then the language in which one expresses the dialogue with oneself has to be distinct and unique for each individual. Each encounters the religious truth in his or her own peculiar way, and it is doubtful if they could all be subsumed or classified into one or a few heads. And if one expresses the encounter with transcendence also in different 'ciphers' (as Karl Jaspers would call them), then there can hardly be a single methodology for its 'study'. In fact it would not even be a topic for any academic study.

In this country, however, we rely a little too much on the Western approach to the philosophy of religion, and therefore we have also taken to analytical philosophy with the same frame of mind. I mean 'Western' in the same sense as being influenced either by those philosophers of religion who respond only to Christianity or at the most to Judaism. Max Müller is reported to have once said, "He who knows only one religion, knows no religion", to which another theologian Adolf von Harnack is said to have responded with words which sound somewhat parochial, "He who knows Christianity, knows all religions". This anecdote illustrates very well the attitude of most Western theologians. It is high time that we in India, which is the home of many of world's great religions, develop our own tradition in the study of religions. Even the Catholic theologians who were reputed to be highly dogmatic in their approach, have in recent years become somewhat more liberal in their attitude to other religions.

It was appropriate therefore that Banaras Hindu University should have organized an all-India seminar on 'Religious Language' in March 1974. A dozen papers that appear in this volume were read and discussed in that seminar, which evinced a keen response both from the theologians and philosophers, trained in Western as well as Indian traditions. Among the papers included in this volume, the ones by



Subhash Anand, Margaret Chatterjee, D. N. Dwivedi, R. C. Gandhi, Y Masih, Krushna Prasad Mishra, Lakshmi Saxena and Avtar Singh are oriented by Western approaches to the problem, while papers by R. N. Mukherji and Sangam Lal Pandey refer to the Indian tradition while dealing with the problem. R. S. Misra's attitude is rather independent and original, while N. S. S. Raman's short paper refers to the Germanic tradition. It is hoped that the papers represent a wide cross-section of opinion.

Nine special papers by teachers of the Department of Philosophy, Dr. A. K. Chatterjee, Prof. N. S. S. Raman, Prof. R. K. Tripathi, Prof. R. S. Misra and Dr. R. R. Pandey, have been added to this volume. It is hoped that these papers would also be read avidly by the reader.

The papers it is hoped are intelligible also to the general reader. The seminars held in the Banaras Hindu University, were all of an all-India nature and were financed by the University Grants Commission. Since the closure of the Centre of Advanced Study in Philosophy, the Department of Philosophy is no longer in a position to organize these seminars twice every year as before. The publication of these proceedings of the seminars was, however, financed by a grant from the U. G. C., for which we are grateful.

I must here record my thankfulness to Professor R. S. Misra, the present Head of the Department of Philosophy, for his kind initiative in the matter of publication and for his ardent support of the projects. To Shri K. N. Mishra, Reader in the Department of Philosophy must go the credit of shouldering the major portion of proof-reading, and also of seeing the whole manuscript through the press. I am deeply indebted to him for his efforts. Dr. L. N. Sharma Reader and Miss Sarbani Mazumdar, Lecturer in the department have also helped in the publication of this volume as my collaborators. I am thankful to them for their valuable assistance.

Banaras Hindu University,  
12th March, 1979.

N. S. S. Raman

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## Religious Language and Demythologisation

By

SUBHASH ANAND

Of late one hears a lot about "demythologisation"<sup>1</sup>. Almost everything under the sun seems to need demythologisation. In this paper I shall trace the history of this problem, and then present the position of Rudolf Bultmann (b. 1884) who was the first to make a systematic study of it. Then I shall try to see how far we can apply this concept. This will mean that I situate the problem in a wider context than that of Bultmann, for whom it was essentially a problem linked with the New Testament.

### Part I—The Genesis of Bultmann's Stand

#### The Tuebingen School

Bultmann accepts the concept of myth from David Strauss (1808–74)<sup>2</sup>. Strauss tried to steer a middle course between the traditionalists and the rationalists. According to the former, all the New Testament data about the supernatural events in the life of Jesus is a historical record of facts. The latter asserted that it was pure fancy. To reconcile these two extreme positions, Strauss proposed his mythical explanation, i. e. the New Testament gives some historical data about Jesus, but this information is embellished by the faith and belief of the early Christian community<sup>3</sup>. In other words the early Christians retroject into the life of Jesus their own ideas. Hence it is difficult to separate the two; i. e. the historical from the mythical.

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1. "Entmythologisierung" in German, "demythisation" in French.

2. *The Jerome Biblical Commentary*. Vol. II, Bangalore, Theological Publications, 1972, 41 : 46, p. 14, (eds. R. E. Brown, J. A. Fitzmeyer, R. Murphy).

3. *ib.*, 41 : 6, p. 9



### **The "Jesus of History" School**

The Tuebingen School to which Strauss belonged was opposed by the "Jesus of History" School represented by W. Herrmann (1846-1922) and Adolf von Harnack (1850-1931). This school held that Christianity is essentially ethical and not metaphysical. It is not interested in objective truth but in practical orientation. This practical need is sufficiently taken care of by the moral demand we carry within ourselves. This moral demand is fully lived by Jesus, fully realised in his "inner life". The early Christians have imposed their dogmas on the "Jesus of History". But the New Testament gives enough data to sketch a reliable picture of the inner life of Jesus which is sufficient for real religion<sup>1</sup>.

### **The "History of Religion" School**

The quest for historical Jesus is criticised by the "History of Religion" School represented among others by J. Weiss (1863-1914), A. Drews (1865-1935) and A. Schweitzer (1875-1965). Basing themselves on the newly discovered science of comparative religion, these scholars asserted that the study of Christianity should not be separated from the universal phenomenon of religion. Religion is but one element of the total cultural complex and as such a reflection thereof.

"Even our earliest documents are thoroughly saturated in the mythical and religious ideas of their time, so that they are not so much records of Jesus as records of what the early Christian community thought about Jesus".<sup>2</sup>

As it is presumed that the early Christians thought in the thought patterns of their times, but which today are obsolete, "the gospel becomes a curious relic from by-gone culture whose ways of thinking are entirely foreign to ours".<sup>3</sup> This makes Schweitzer conclude that the Jesus presented by the

1. J. Macquarrie, *Twentieth-Century Religious Thought*, London, SCM Press, 1963, pp. 84-5, 88-9.

2. *ib.*, p. 144.

3. *Ib.*, p. 145.

New Testament "will be to our times a stranger and an enigma".<sup>1</sup> At the most he is a "mythical symbol for the universal history of the divine world process".<sup>2</sup> Thus the quest for the historical Jesus has to be abandoned and one must realise that what is more important is that one finds in the teaching of Jesus, as Schweitzer would have it, "a spiritual force" which is sufficient basis for a "religion of love".<sup>3</sup>

### **The Existentialism of Heidegger**

Bultmann has been a student of philosophy, particularly Existentialism. He frankly acknowledges his debt to Martin Heidegger (1889-1976).

"The work of Existential Philosophy which I came to know through my discussion with Martin Heidegger has become of decisive significance to me".<sup>4</sup>

For Heidegger history is not merely a record of the past, of events which I treat as objects, but an encounter, for I am a part of history and self-understanding and history have to be coordinated<sup>5</sup>. This notion is fundamental for Bultmann's "existential interpretation" of the New Testament which is the positive side of demythologisation.<sup>6</sup>

### **Part II—Bultmann's Theory of Demythologisation Demythologisation as a hermeneutic method**

Bultmann had referred to demythologisation in his earlier writings but it was only in 1941 that he made a systematic exposition of his thesis in a lecture entitled: "New Testament and Mythology".<sup>7</sup> For Bultmann demythologisation is a

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1. *ib.*, p. 146.

2. *ib.*, p. 148.

3. *ib.*, p. 146.

4. R. Bultmann, *Existence and Faith*, London, Fontana Library, 1978 p. 341.

5. H. H. Zachner, *The Question of God*, London, Collins, 1968. pp. 223-5.

6. *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. II, London, Burns and Oates, 1968, p. 65 (ess. K. Rahner et al ii).

7. *ib.*



way to handle the data of the New Testament. It is essentially a hermeneutic method. I say this because demythologisation could be taken to mean not only as a method of interpretation of texts, but also as an interpretation of phenomenon, i.e. as an approach to reality, as a "Weltanschauung". As such it would be related to the phenomenon of "secularisation" which means

"The loosening of the world from religious and quasi-religious understanding of itself, the dispelling of all closed world-views, the breaking of all supernatural myths and sacred symbols".<sup>1</sup>

As a hermeneutic method it does not mean the elimination of myth, but an existential interpretation of the same.<sup>2</sup> This I hope, will become clear as we proceed.

### The Context of the Problem

At first sight it may appear that for Bultmann, demythologisation is a response to the scientific attitude of the world of today. But that would be a grave misunderstanding. For him the scientific outlook of modern man is only an occasion and not the cause of his proposal.<sup>3</sup> Demythologisation is demanded not by a need to sound modern, but by the very nature of faith. Faith is self-commitment to the one who is supremely the Other. To be real, it must be aware of the Other as such. Hence

"We must set aside all specifically "mythological formulations because they completely obscure the fact that God's difference from the world is not merely quantitative but qualitative".<sup>4</sup>

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1. H. Cox, *The Secular City*. New ed. New York, Macmillan Co, 1966. pp. 1-2.

2. Zahrnt, *on. cit.*, p. 220.

3. S. M. Ogden, in his Introduction to Bultmann's *Existence and Faith*, p. 20; Cfr. also Zachner, *on. cit.*, pp. 219-220.

4. Ogden; *ib.*

### A Threefold Critique<sup>1</sup>

Before explaining what Bultmann meant by demythologisation, it will be helpful to present briefly three important distinctions he makes :

(i) For Bultmann, history can be understood as a mere record of past events, or as a relation of two persons, one living here and now and the other in history. This relation demands that the person living here and now tries to enter into the thought-pattern of the person in history, for only then can he hope to understand the other. This understanding, this encounter, does not allow the person here and now to remain neutral, but calls for a response.

“Communication of the past, therefore, is not to be considered as a historical report, but as a summons in which the past becomes contemporary”.<sup>2</sup>

This may be called a critique of historical discourse.

(ii) Bultmann further offers a critique of theological discourse. For him, faith is essentially a mode of existence, a way of being, nay the only way of being authentic. But this way of being, demands an awareness and confession of the same. This confession of faith must be distinguished from theology which is a notional explanation of the confession of faith and as such is of “second order”.

(iii) Lastly we have his critique of hermeneutic, which is an application of the critique of historical discourse to the field of hermeneutics. This will enable us to “de-historicise” historical texts. To put it differently, we may consider the historical text to be a “spoken word”. A spoken word is an indication of the person speaking and as such calls for a

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1. In this section I have tried to summarise an article by F. Theunis. “Hermeneutic, demythisation et veracite”, pub. in *Demythisation et Ideologie*, Paris, Aubier, 1973, pp. 465-80.

2. R. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, vol. I, London, SCM Press 1969, p. 306.



response from the person spoken to. Or a spoken word always implies some sort of I-Thou relation. The person spoken to cannot remain neutral.

### **The Meaning of Demythologisation**

We have seen above that all the three critiques involve some sort of commitment. They are marked by the need of some sort of faith: faith in the person speaking. With regard to the New Testament it means that the Word of God can be a summons to faith only if it is seen as such. The word is essentially spoken in Jesus, may be he is the Logos, the Word<sup>1</sup>. But "the historical person of Jesus, was very soon turned into a myth in primitive Christianity<sup>2</sup>". On the other hand, "in the recounting of the myth nothing at all is said about my existence, about the reality within which alone I can hear God."<sup>3</sup> Hence the need of demythologising. Bultmann takes mythical representation in a very broad sense, and myth is employed by the New Testament writers to bring out the importance of the Christ-event<sup>4</sup>. For Bultmann myth is not an imaginary story, but an attempt to express the other-worldly reality in terms of this world<sup>5</sup>. But in doing so it devaluates that reality. Hence the need to remove all "mythological" formularions. It is only then that we become aware of the absolute transcendence of God, it is only then that the New Testament becomes a "proclamation", a summons to faith. Thus if the New Testament is to have any meaning today, or for that matter at any time, then it should not seem to "communicate a mythical picture of the world" but as a "living word of salvation, word therefore which must be really heard in order effectively to transform human

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1. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, p. 308.

2. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 562, qt from "Primitive Christianity in its Contemporary Setting".

3. Bultmann, *Faith and Understanding*, pp. 71-2.

4. *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. II, p. 66.

5. Terome, *Biblical Commentary*, vol. II. 41-51.

condition"<sup>1</sup>. Thus the central story of the New Testament i. e. the death and resurrection of Jesus means that man must "die to the world in order to live by the unseen reality of God"<sup>2</sup>. The existential interpretation—the positive aspect of demythologisation—means the interpretation of myths in terms of the human condition, e. g. the creation myth points to man's finitude; the story of the first fall indicates that man lives an inauthentic life etc<sup>3</sup>. In other words, myth does not give me a picture of the world, but of my situation, of my self-understanding in the world.

### **Part III-Myth and the Modern Man : Beyond Bultmann. Wider Meaning of Demythologisation**

For Bultmann demythologisation was a hermeneutic approach to the New Testament. However demythologisation—"perhaps the most notable contribution to theological hermeneutics in recent times"<sup>4</sup> is not a new concept. Already Plato had tried to go beyond the myth in order to bring out its message. He "sought to free myth from its current inadequacies and repulsive elements, and to look for its logos, its meaning and function, for the hidden truth which could be extracted from the myth itself".<sup>5</sup>

Since Bultmann the concept of demythologisation has been used in contexts other than Biblical.<sup>6</sup> One could thus try to give a very broad definition of demythologisation: stripping non-spatio-temporal concepts of their spatio-temporal expression". I could illustrate this by some simple examples. Demythologisation would mean that I do not speak of God as being "up there", "in heaven" etc. It would mean that I do not consider God as being subject to space-time conditions,

1. *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. II. p. 65.

2. Macquarrie, op. cit., p. 364.

3. J. Macquarrie, *God-Talk*, London, SCM press, 1967, p. 37.

4. ib., p. 148.

5. *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. IV. London, Burns and Oates, 1969, p. 154.

6. e. g. *Demythisation et Morale*, Paris, Aubicr. *Demythologising Marxism*, ed, by F. J. Adelman, The Hague, Martinus Nijhoff, 1969.



not even speak of him that way. Since this word is being used in different contexts, naturally there are shades of meaning.

### **Some Problems**

The concept of demythologisation gives rise to a number of problems : 1) Is the New Testament data purely mythical, or basically historical ? 2) Is it possible to avoid spatio-temporal expressions in indicating non-spatio-temporal realities ? 3) Is the myth a legitimate mode of expression for modern man ? The first question is primarily a problem of Christian theology and Biblical exegesis. Hence we shall not discuss it here. The other two questions do have a philosophical bearing. The second question treats about the legitimacy of mythical language and the third of its relevance to our times. We shall now discuss the latter two questions.

### **The Spatio-temporality of Human Language**

Human language is an attempt to communicate human experience. I cannot really communicate to you something I have never really experienced. A man born blind can never tell me about light in the same way as one born with healthy eyes, even though the former may be conversant with the wave and the quantum theories of light, while the latter may be completely ignorant about them. To a man born blind a "description of light" will sound hollow. Human language not only arises from human experience, but presupposes a minimum of "experience in common" to be communicative. But human experience is fundamentally spatio-temporal. Man cannot really be in the world without being in it spatio-temporally. He cannot experience the world and even persons except spatio-temporally. If this is the case, then human language cannot but be spatio-temporal. I do not mean to exclude the possibility of "refining" this language, but I feel that we can never fully do away with spatio-temporality. I shall illustrate this by two words so commonly used when talking about God or the Absolute ; viz. "transcendent" and "immanent". Even a casual analysis of these

words will reveal that they—"go beyond", "be in",—are basically spatio-temporal. Some modern theologians would like to speak of God as the "ground of our being". Here too the spatio-temporal symbolism is evident.

### The Meaning of Myth

Myth is an elaborate space-time way of speaking of realities that are beyond space-time. To answer the question, is a myth meaningful to modern man, we shall first see what a myth is.

"It is not without fear and trembling that a historian of religion approaches the problem of myth. This is not only because of that preliminary embarrassing question : what is intended by myth ? It is also because the answers given depend for the most part on the documents selected by the scholar. From Plato and Fontenelle to Schelling and Bultmann, philosophers and theologians have imposed innumerable definitions of myth".<sup>1</sup>

Since it is so difficult to define a myth, I shall—following Macquarrie<sup>2</sup>—indicate the "minimal characteristics" of a myth.

The language of a myth is "dramatic". It is essentially action-centred and hence concrete. But this does not mean that its significance is less, rather it is paradigmatic, i. e. serves as a pattern for future events, otherwise it would not be a myth. Further the language of the myth is "evocative". It has several levels, and evokes in our minds not one idea but many, not only ideas but also emotions. Thirdly the myth has an element of "immediacy". It is prereflective and man is immersed in the myth, so that he does not stand against it in a process of reflection. "Alogicality" is another characteristic of myth. In a myth—as in a dream—there

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1. M. Eliade, *The Quest*, Chicago, The University of Chicago Press, 1969, P. 72.

2. Macquarrie, op. cit., pp. 171-8.



is a coming together of different times, places, persons, events and sequences in a way difficult to explain. But this does not mean that a myth is absurd or fantastic. The "supernatural" is another feature of a myth. The actors of a myth are divine, or semi-divine beings and in any case not ordinary human beings. Further a myth is characterised by "remoteness in time and space". It happened long long ago, at the beginning of time. Lastly a myth has a "community function". It holds together a tribe or a group of tribes. It becomes the unifying centre of a community.

### **Myth and the Modern Man**

Having explained some of the minimal characteristics of myth we can now proceed to answer the third question we posed ourselves : Is the myth relevant to modern man. We can best answer this question by trying to see whether the minimal characteristics—at least some of them—mentioned above are applicable also to modern man.

We have seen above that language is man's attempt to communicate his experience. In a world of scientific attitude where a constant effort is made to grasp reality in a very matter-of-fact way, to study the laws underlying this reality, and to control it, is such a world can man be interested in concrete events and meaningfully use evocative language ? I believe he can. Let us first take two examples from the world of nature. A student of science is still moved by a beautiful sunset, by a waterfall. Sunset is a daily event, and water of the waterfall is the same as that in the laboratory. It is just  $H_2O$ . Yet these concrete events move modern man. They do so precisely because they evoke in him not just one idea but many, not just ideas but emotions too. When a scientist sees a waterfall he is moved precisely because in seeing that water he goes beyond  $H_2O$ . Thus, if today's man still finds concrete events and experience meaningful precisely because it is evocative, then I do not see any objection to his using a form of language that is concrete and evocative. The aspects of

reality that move the scientist when he contemplates the sunset etc. are such as cannot be grasped by any "scientific" method. A myth tries to convey a "perspective of reality to which empirical and positivist, abstract and rationalist concepts remain blind"<sup>1</sup>.

The use of the concrete and evocative language is specially relevant to religion, because not only tribal religions, but others too, are based not on abstract conclusions of a metaphysical inquiry, but on a concrete "event" whether historical or mythical. Further, if religion is to have any meaning to me, here and now, as a mature person, then it must be based on a personal experience of some sort of the Divine. Religion will cease to be a religion for me, if it is a mere adherence to a system of thought, however coherent and beautiful.

Can modern man do away with "immediacy"? Can he lead a life purely of the second order? I am afraid not. He will go mad if he tries to do so. Behavioural scientists are becoming more and more aware of the role of "play"—which is not the same as a "game" in the make-up of a healthy personality<sup>2</sup>. They are realizing that for man to be a fully mature person he must be "homo ludens"—a playing man.

Modern man cannot get rid of "alogicality", neither on the conscious, nor on the subconscious level. We are all well aware how alogical our dreams are. They will always be part of man's life. Perhaps modern man does not give to dreams the same importance as the ancients did, but he cannot—as Freud has tried to show—simply brush them aside. Though they are alogical, they reveal a great deal of the individual's personality, and behavioural scientists are doing dream-analysis as part of their equipment. Man cannot be completely logical even on the conscious level. What is the logicity of the handkerchief which a lover gives his

1. *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. IV, p. 154.

2. e. g. "Celibacy without Play?" by Patricia Kinsey, in *Jeevadhara, A Journal of Christian Interpretation*, vol. III, No. 18, Nov.-1973, pp. 508-514.



beloved? Can we with purely empirical and logical concepts, justify it, or even explain it?

Scientific advance has led to the elimination of the "supernatural", of the "miraculous" from many areas of human life. Modern man is becoming more and more secular. He does not "look up to heaven" to find explanation for an event. This is really a healthy trend as it indicates the "coming of age of man". However, can modern man completely eliminate the "supernatural", the "miraculous"? I am not too sure.

We noted that "remoteness in time and space" is one of the characteristics of a myth. However, I must add that this is essentially functional. As a myth is paradigmatic, it is placed "at the beginning". In other words, the remoteness in time and space "liberates the story from its particularity"<sup>1</sup> and confers on it a certain valid-for-all-times character. In this sense we can say that modern man too is open to this characteristic. Certain figures—let us call them "heroes"—are mythologised. They are given a significance that goes beyond their particular space-time limit; for instance we speak of Gandhi as having significance not only for India, but for all nations, not only in 20th century, but for generations to come. Gandhi "continues to live among us".

Lastly a myth is characterised by a community-forming function. The "event" that goes to make the myth exerts a unifying influence. In a way, this is true even of our times. If today we see communities being built up, it is primarily not by the force of abstract, systematic ideologies, much less by scientific theories or hypothesis. It is usually an "event"—whether this be a person or a series of happenings is immaterial—that brings about unity in a community. I would even say that if a community has no "event" to centre upon, then it tends to create one.

We have thus shown that the minimal characteristics of a myth are verifiable to a certain degree in the modern man.

1. Macquarrie, *op. cit.*, p. 173.

They are bound to be so as long as man is true to himself. He is not just a thinking machine not merely moved by ideas but also by events, not merely by thinking, but also by feeling. To be fully himself, man cannot negate one aspect of his being. As Pascal once said, the man who tries to become an angel turns out to be a brute. Hence to say that the myth has absolutely no meaning for modern man, would only indicate that such a critique of myth is "rationalistic, positivistic and superficial"<sup>1</sup>.

### **Yesterday's myth and Today's Man**

One last question still remains to be answered. Are those myths, born in a bygone era, meaningful to modern man? Since communication demands minimum of experience-in-common, and since our attitudes, thought-patterns etc. are so different from those of the time when the myth was born, the question seems quite legitimate. To this I have two answers to offer.

No doubt the myths born in bygone days seem quite enigmatic to us today. However as Carl Jung gives us to understand, there are certain 'archetypes' that are the common patrimony of all men. This could be for two reasons: (1) We have our humanity in common, hence it is natural that we have certain common behavioural patterns. (2) Certain symbols that go into the myth seem to connaturally signify the reality they symbolise; e. g. water connaturally signifies life and purification. Hence we should not be surprised if water is considered as the primeval womb, or if it is used as part of a penitential ritual. Thus though these myths originated hundreds of years ago, they are not complete strangers to us. Of course they may not have the same appeal to us as they had to the ancients.

Secondly, if I may dare to speak thus, we could call myths the 'dreams' of the collective subconscious. Freud has shown that dreams are a good way of probing the individual's

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1. *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. IV, p. 154.



subconscious. Jung went one step further. He postulated a collective subconscious of which the archetypes are the manifestation. If we accept the myths as the dreams of the collective subconscious, then we are faced with an inevitable conclusion : we have to take them seriously even if they belong to a bygone era. For that era is part of our history, and its subconscious is partly our own. Or to put it in different words, these myths reveal much to us about ourselves for our lives; especially our subconscious is deeply rooted in the past. We are not born in a vacuum.

*Conclusion:* In this paper we have seen that the problem of demythologisation is as old as Plato. However it comes into prominence in our times partly because of a personistic understanding of faith (for Bultmann), and partly due to the scientific attitudes of our times (for others). But we have also tried to indicate the limits of demythologisation : i. e. we have to interpret myths and not eliminate them, for even if they belong to a bygone era, they are part of our collective personality. We have also seen that man as man is open to mythical language. I may then sum up this paper with the lines of Karl Jaspers :

“Mythical thinking has not passed away, it is proper to us in every age. We need to regain the mythical way of thinking in our assurance of reality<sup>1</sup>”.

And, may I add, we need to create new myths.

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1. Quoted by H. Fries in *Sacramentum Mundi*, vol. IV. p. 154.

# Religious Language : Some Criticisms and Suggestions

By

MARGARET CHATTERJEE

## INTRODUCTION

The rival claims of religion, philosophy and science as dispensers of light have come to the fore in successive periods of history. Betwixt and between them all is the discipline known as theology, a rational study of the concept of God and attendant concepts connected with theistic belief. The dominant period of the connection between religion and philosophy in the West extends from Neo-platonic thought to the seventeenth century. Before that, for the most part philosophy tried to steer clear of 'mysteries', and after that, philosophy made strenuous efforts to free itself from religion, and even more, from theology. Secular influences on religious language are legion. I mention only a few :—monarchical analogies (king; kingdom etc.), agricultural analogies (shepherd, flock, sower and the seed etc.), analogies from art (design and designer), historical approaches of the early Romantic movement (used by Renan and others), and influences from science (Paley's 'watch' metaphor, the idea of evolution as shown in the concept of 'progressive revelation', the 'new theology' of the twentieth century and so on). Recent interest in religious language is part of the last of these influences (influences from science) in so far as the desire to find *some* empirical moorings for various types of discourse is one of the early springs of the analytical movement. This interest is symptomatic of the trend to rethink ontological matters in terms of epistemology, a trend for which Galileo and Kepler bear a considerable responsibility. Earlier interest in religious language, it must be remembered, was deeply-rooted in ontological concern. I refer to the skilled use by



Catholic theologians of the method of *analogia entis*. The basis of this method, and it was a method of argument, was certain beliefs concerning the distinction between finite and infinite being and the relation between them.

Analogous uses of language when closely examined, tell us rather more about ourselves than about the 'that' or the 'whom' of religion. It is this that has made philosophers of religion who talk about God-talk, sensitive to the cognitive import of so-called religious language. The de-ontologizing of ethical discourse has caused problems of no less difficulty for those concerned with moral questions. In a sense, however, the problem for the philosopher of religion is more serious, in that religious discourse has reference not only to the human dimension but claims to be saying something about the numinous. There is also one thing more. Ordinary language philosophy, being part of the empiricist tradition, was originally occupied with empirical discourse. Subsequent developments under the polymorphic umbrella suggested that the more oblique the empirical elements were (approaching asymptotically to zero point perhaps), the more our 'ordinary' concepts were being *stretched*. This produced the impression that metaphysical and religious language was extra-ordinary in some way. Odd evidence of this is found in the Encyclopædia Britannica entry on 'Analogy' (the 1973 printing of the 14th Edition, which includes the sentence, 'It is likely that most forms of theological and metaphysical thinking, where language has to be used beyond its normal context will make use of analogies, and the problem of their justification will be debated'). I quote this only to draw attention to the question-begging phrase 'normal contexts', although there are other peculiarities in the sentence besides this.

The two figures who have exerted the most influence on those who analyse religious language in this century are Wittgenstein and Bultmann. The polymorphic umbrella encouraged those who found that religious language could now shelter with dignity beneath it, although the task of

analysing this particular type of language still remained. Broadly speaking analysts can be divided into two classes as far as those who derive from Wittgenstein are concerned, those who strain to pinpoint some kind of empirical anchorage or other, and those whose analysis goes in other directions and who are not unduly troubled by the abandonment of cognitive claims. A person like John Hick who finds within faith itself a cognitive aspect manages to that extent to move out of the purely linguistic approach.

Wittgenstein's direct references to religion<sup>1</sup> do not seem, however, to show any great insight into the religious temperament. He notes that the gulf between believer and unbeliever in religion is not paralleled by, say, the difference between science and commonsense. We would agree. He then says that the difference between believer and unbeliever does not depend on evidence. It does, however, it can be objected, have something to do with the *interpretation* of evidence. That religious language has a commissive force (his third point) would be granted by all thinkers from the time of antiquity downwards. The next two points are these (4) Before we participate in religious belief we need to have been trained in the technique of using the appropriate picture or pictures. (5) Acquiring the technique means learning what conclusions are drawn from the picture and what are not. This last point is illustrated by him by this example, speaking of "God the Father" does not imply that God is a physical progenitor. These last two points give a very simplified idea of the "acquisition" of religious belief and completely neglect the element of tradition and cultural conditioning which shapes religious belief and religious language.

Bultmann's work has two sources which could have, strangely enough, led in opposite directions. The demythologization of religious language is something which only someone anxious to bring it more into line with the 'modern'

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1. Lectures and Conversations on aesthetics, psychology and religious belief.



temperament would presumably want to do, that is, a temperament essentially concerned with the objective, with fact (in which historical fact is also to be included). The second source, however, the existentialist one, has usually led thinkers (and it certainly leads Bultmann) away from the objective to the personal and the unobjectifiable, the unverifiable. Now to bring theology more in line with science to something which many recent Protestant theologians have been specially concerned to do. The Catholic has always regarded theology as already possessing the status of a science. The *rationality* of Catholic theology has always been stressed. The Protestant in his concern with faith perhaps feels more vulnerable to charges of irrationality and has therefore been anxious to rethink articles of faith in terms consonant with science (Cf. Bishop Robinson's remarks on transcendence).

There are two other matters which must be borne in mind if Bultmann's 'demythologization' is to be seen in its proper perspective. The quest for the historical has been a major strand in theological writings since the early nineteenth century. Now whether the historical need necessarily drive out the mythical is a matter of controversy, for myths can always be re-interpreted and the skilful modernist usually does just this, adding often a new mythical layer—a new kind of 'supervenience'. But there is no doubt that the religions which take their stand on historical bases (Judaism, Christianity and Islam) can find themselves in a quandary over myth. Reflecting on why Bultmann rouses little if any interest in India I can find the following possible answers. (1) The non-historic religions have no problem of sorting out the historical from the mythical. This is the case even in Buddhism which happens to have a historic under-figure. (2) The need to demythologize is felt only when myths no longer live. When myths are part of a culture-pattern re-enacted through the calendar year of festivals the need is different e. g. it may be needed to preserve the myth apart from its historical accretions (say, caste) or to utilize myth for new social purposes.

(3) In India there is relatively little theology as such. In the community where there is, that is among Indian Christians, we find the interesting phenomenon of the partial acquisition of mythic elements from the local culture, a twentieth century development which would have been unthinkable in the last century. Returning to the so-called historic religions, it is true that it is the theologian's business (as far as the particular faiths are concerned) to interpret history, and that around historic figures a considerable mythic element inevitably grows. The second of the two matters under discussion is this. A world religion, some may think, needs to scrap its local mythology if it is to preserve its universal character. On the other hand, the way in which religions which have been embraced by very different peoples have often offered hospitality to local myths has enabled them to set down firm roots thereby. Modern societies have found no difficulty in adopting parallel sets of mythologies and maintaining them in water-tight compartments. There are also cases of interpenetration (say in South East Asia) where the results have been curious. The fact is that myths remain as long their social function is still operative. Only when a mythology is already dead or dying does the question of removing the traces arise. The *deliberate* adoption of a new mythology arises under conditions which are too complicated to be gone into here.

Bultmann's demythologization has two aspects, the recasting of theological language in human existential terms and the salvaging of a core of belief which will be free of first century concepts. An example may make the first of these two aspects clear. The demythologized form of the statement that man was formed of the dust of the ground and into his nostrils was breathed the breath of life would be that man in his being is compounded of possibility and facticity. From this example at least we might infer that the net product of demythologization is hardly 'clarification'. That both aspects of the demythologization proposed by Bultmann involve desirable moves cannot be taken for granted. Jung is on the opposite side to Bultmann with regard to the potency of archetypes and symbols, and as far as the second aspect goes, many



Christian theologians find special meaning in the values of the primitive church and first century concepts in general.

The common thing about the influence of both Wittgenstein and Bultmann, diverse and divergent though these two seminal thinkers be, is to make philosophers of religion think that their main business is to make religious language *respectable*. whether by the method of clarification or re-thinking. The effect in neither case, whether that of Wittgenstein or of Bultmann, was quite honestly to "leave everything as it was", because the way one says things, does make a difference to what one says, and this most of all in the domain of religion. The charge of "You can't say that" and likewise "you oughtn't to say that" falls flat in the context of religious language. The logical oddity of religious language after all strikes the unbeliever rather than the believer. Analyses of religious language have in short done little to reduce this oddity in the eyes of the pure analyst and have not done much to throw light on the content of religious belief. Leaving all these red herrings swimming in various directions I wish to close this introductory portion of what I have to say by proceeding to formulate a question.

### **Does the analysis of religious language rest on a mistake ?**

I shall try to show that there have been two major mistakes (the "weaker" form of my thesis would speak of these as unfortunate directions instead of as mistakes). The climate of opinion in which the analysis of so-called religious language grew up, was, as is well-known, the accommodation of it under the polymorphic umbrella. The falsificability principle was interpreted for the most part in a way favourable to religious discourse. The prisoner had the benefit of innocence until guilt was established. There were, I think, two mistakes made at this early stage in the movement. The first was the identification of religious language with theological discourse. The mistake, however, was a natural one in view of the considerable overlapping of territory between theology and

philosophy for centuries. The overlapping concerned both concepts and arguments, for example, the concept of god and the cosmological argument regarding His existence. But even here there was some confusion. The proposition 'God exists' is, properly, a philosopher's proposition. The theologian goes on to formulate propositions of a somewhat different kind, for example, propositions concerning the divine 'nature', in short propositions embodying doctrines about God. As for the open question 'Does God exist' ? this is a philosopher's question. It can of course also be a layman's question which can spring from genuine doubt. The theologian's task is certainly one of exceptional delicacy and presumption to provide a rational structure for religious belief, a structure within a particular tradition and for a particular community at a particular time in history. There are theologies, just as there are religions. Whether all religions do or do not have theologies is a very pertinent question but not one to which I intend to be diverted here.

Now those who are concerned with theology do need to respond to the cognitivist challenge (we need to know in what or in whom we have believed) and this challenge is not, in my opinion, equivalent to the verificationist challenge. It is perfectly possible for the theologian to make out a case for the cognitive weight of belief or faith, to draw attention to the way in which knowledge of persons (whether human or Divine) seems both to be trans-empirical and to transcend the empirical and so on. If pressed on the cognitivist issue myself, I should say something like this. We constantly read meanings into things at the empirical level and this is something which the religious man does even more. Some of these meanings are culturally conditioned and contain directives as elements of their meanings. The religious woman who in the early morning in almost any Indian town picks flowers for worship (often from others' gardens) is at the first stage of her act of worship. (Incidentally this is an example of the religious motive overriding the ethical if the flowers are taken without permission from a neighbour's garden). Ah, but this



may be an example of the cognitive element in religious experience, it may be objected, rather than in religious language. This does not worry me. Religious experience finds expression in language. Often a gesture takes the place of language, as in the case of a floral offering. The cognitive core is that which is responded to. The 'that' is not merely empirical. The sun-worshipper does not perceive the centre of the solar system, the luminosity which makes the difference between night and day, but an object possessed of luminosity. My example has been given from outside theism. I said the first mistake was the identification of religious language with theological discourse. The theologian needs to clarify his own discourse and this is something which in fact theologians do themselves in each generation. This leaves the philosopher of religion 'religious language' in senses outside the realm of theology. I shall return to this later in an attempt to exploit this in ways of use to the Indian philosopher.<sup>1</sup>

We now come to the second mistake. The analysts were in all cases occupied with a clarificatory, if not a corrective task. Actual grammar was to be replaced by logical grammar. Even in the later stages of the movement there was an attempt to introduce order where disorder ostensibly prevailed, to adjudicate, to disentangle logical lines, to plot coordinates, map the geography of uncharted concepts and so forth. MacIntyre's warning in *Metaphysical Beliefs* (p. 185) was a wise one :—"The philosopher is not concerned qua philosopher to offer an account of religion which will make religion appear logically reputable, but only to describe how religious language is in fact used". In fact, then, religious language does not need correction. It needs understanding.<sup>2</sup> The

1. A valuable analysis is provided in N. V. Banerjee's new book on *The Spirit of Indian Philosophy* (in the press) where he shows that the preoccupation of many of ancient India's philosophers was with 'ways of life' rather than with theologies or even with philosophies of religion.

2. I have dealt with the presuppositions of this understanding in my paper "The Presuppositions of inter-religious Communication, a philosophical approach", *Religious Studies* (London). III, 1966,

business of religious language is to lead<sup>1</sup> rather than to mislead. Religious language *can*, however, have theological presuppositions which *may* mislead. At least they may mislead whoever tries to analyse the meaning 'from the outside'.

### What then is religious language ?

By religious language I understand the language of addressal (as against the language of statement), of prayer, praise, worship, religious celebration (including verbal and non-verbal acts) and religious instruction (including questioning and also the use of parable). Religious language in the sense I am speaking of it, overlaps in many traditions with poetry, and here I would cite as examples the hymns of Guru Nanak, the songs of the Vaishnavas in many parts of India and the songs of the Bauls of Bengal. Religious language is 'revealing' in that it reveals what the believer believes and through it those outside any particular fold may come to share the beliefs of those already in it or at least to glimpse a part of their meaning. Religious language in the sense I am understanding it expresses intense experience (I am not thereby committed to saying that religious language is purely emotive). As in the case of all intense experience their embodiment in words is often witness to the breakdown of language.<sup>2</sup> Those who use religious language have all borne witness to its inadequacy. Religious language is the vehicle of an interpretation of and response to life produced by tradition and personal belief. Religious language is never culture-free.<sup>3</sup> The movement away from the study of formal systems of language in the 60ties and 70ties is favourable to the investigation of language in its cultural context, and

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1. That some religious utterances may have socially undesirable consequences is not ruled and by this.
  2. Among recent publications I. M. Lewis, book on *Ecstatic Religion* is interesting in this regard.
  3. Cf. the 'rock' image in the Old Testament (A great rock is a blessing in the desert as it gives shade), the Baul use of the imagery of the ferry, river-banks, the caged bird etc.



here a whole world of phenomena awaits the investigator interested in the religions of this sub-continent.

The moral philosopher makes a distinction between the standpoint of the agent and the standpoint of the spectator. The language of morals is used by both agent and spectator. But the spectator's investigation of religious language does not itself amount to religious language at all. Another thing. The religious language of the believer has a meaning which the *mere* spectator (the investigator), be he as sympathetic as possible, will not capture. We have also another interesting category, the language used by the guru or instructor.<sup>1</sup> Let us look at these a little more closely. The language of the believer ranges from the prayers offered by Bihor tribesmen to trees and ancestors, to the songs of the Bauls and the recitation of Ram-nam. It is worth nothing that religious language is often not merely *spoken* but chanted or sung. This is a manifestation of the *mantric* character of much of Indian religious language, and all this centuries before Austin talked of the perlocutionary use of language. That language produces effects has always been recognized by communities who set store by the magic properties of certain syllables. Our ancestors have done things with words for centuries. The effect of *repetition* of words on the human psyche, as a form of invocation, and for inducing a sense of comfort and confidence should also be mentioned.

### **An approach to Indian religious language**

So far I have suggested an approach which centres not on theological language, not indeed philosophical treatments of religious concepts, but on the language used by religious men in the course of their religious life. It follows that the interesting thing about that language will not be its sentence-

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1. Peter Brent's book on *Godmen* gives many examples of this from contemporary sources. This could be compared with normative ethics which has been somewhat frowned on by those who adopt the linguistic approach to ethics,

typology, but the cultural patterns of which such language is an expression. This approach will I think give good results in the study of Indian religions. It has the advantage of directing our attention away from (1) strictly theistic discourse (2) the language of statement. Positively it makes room for (a) recognition of the aliveness of the mythic (d) sensitivity to the interfusion of the religious and the poetic (c) treating the whole spectrum of religious life ranging from simple tribal invocations to the sophisticated and prepared silences of, say, Tibetan Buddhism.

The remainder of this paper will be devoted to a few examples. The religious language of the tribal people of Kinnaur in Himachal Pradesh or among the Monpas of Kameng in Arunachal—NEFA has both Hindu and Buddhist elements, whereas the songs sung by the Mundas (sung and not recited) are in many ways less sophisticated. The Baul songs of Bengal, as much poems as humns, present a fascinating admixture of Vaishnav and Sufi influences and, as Rabindranath put it, "without causing any quarrel between Quran and Puran". Of special interest is the fact that whereas the religious language of the major world religion is tied up with scriptures, Baul songs proclaim that religion is outside the scope of scriptures. The Bauls speak of "Ved Bahirbhut Dharma". Lalan sung many songs to this effect. Reference was made earlier to the use of religious language for instruction. Among the Bauls, the initiation, the "Diksha", is done through songs. Both Guru and disciple sing. As the song proceeds the disciple 'realises' the lines of the song. This is his *sadhana*. (This can be compared with the songs of Thyagaraja). The symbolism of the Baul songs is very rich. The human body itself becomes a symbol, with its skies, hills, oceans and forests. The Tantric imagery of flying birds is used too. The philosophers' conception of *atma* undergoes a transformation in the notion of 'Moner manush' and divine love is experienced in human love. In this way, one could say, folk culture turns the tables on the philosophers who had conceived of liberation in terms of a



shutting out of the senses. This opened the way for a fusion of the poetic and religious impulses something which may not be exclusive to Bengal (for it is very evident in Tamil literature too) but which is certainly very much there in Bengali literature both in the pre-Chaitanya and post-Chaitanya period.

Language of a more theological order can be found in the Saivite canonical work, *Tirumandiram*, where Tirumular says, "Do not deny the existence of the Almighty Who in His Justice commanded fire to abide in the middle of the sea (to prevent its overflow on the land). He is the Lord of the gods. He showers His grace day and night. "We herein discover many layers of belief—theism along with belief in "the gods", mythic control over cosmic elements, the moral attributes of the Deity, His constant grace etc. The Tamil text no doubt contains overtones which are lost in translation.

The confessional language of the *sadhak* is illustrated in the writings of the fourteenth century Kashmiri woman mystic. She says "I, Lalla, went out far in search of Shiva, the omnipresent Lord; after wandering, I, Lalla, found Him at last within my own self, abiding in His own house". By the side of this can be set the songs of Ramaprasad of eighteenth century Bengal, for example the following song devoted to Kali :—"When you lie down, think you are doing obeisance to Her; in sleep meditate on the Mother, when you eat, think you are offering oblations to the Mother; whatever you hear with your ear is all the mantras of the Mother ....." Perhaps here we find not only a confession, but a prescription for those who want to follow this way.

Enough has been said to indicate the lines on which I feel investigation of Indian religious language would be fruitful—not in order to dissect its logical structure, or demythologise it, but in order to discover the content of Indian religious beliefs in all their variety and to understand the meaning of the rich symbolism to which many cultures

and traditions have made their contribution over the centuries. This kind of field-work approach (which if properly done would involve the skills of the social historian and the cultural anthropologist as well) would be the basis from which comparative questions about concepts could be asked—much later.



# The Grammar of Religious Language

By

D. N. DWIVEDI

I want to begin this paper with some explanatory notes. First, the term "grammar" has been used here to refer to [different uses, purposes, functions and forces of religious language. Second, my primary task in this paper is to examine some current analyses of religious language and to offer my own suggestions—only suggestions, not views—by way of comments. The main trouble with these analyses is, as we shall see, that they are influenced by external considerations, such as what religious language ought to be. I do not say that such considerations are always explicit. Nor do I intend to create the impression that I alone am awake in the world of dreamers. Perhaps I have my own dreams to tell. I am not sure. Third, there are so many religions, so many concepts of man, world and god that it is very difficult to give any account which applies, with fairness and justice, to all of them. Fourth, religious language is very complex and extremely complicated. It contains almost all those linguistic forms that analytic philosophers have painstakingly distinguished. The main problem, however, is whether it also contains utterances which are used to talk about God. Last, care must be taken to distinguish the utterances of a believer from theological assertions even though the two are comingled in almost all advanced religions.

*Cognitive noncognitive* : After a lengthy preamble, let us take up the cognitive/non-cognitive dichotomy. Is a grand division of sentences into cognitive and non-cognitive possible ? Russell and the earlier Wittgenstein thought that the essential function of language is to describe facts. Logical positivists developed this theory into its extreme form and divided meanings of expressions into two types : cognitive and non-cognitive. According to this dichotomy only analytic and

empirical statements have cognitive meaning, other utterances are nonsense. At best they may possess emotive meaning. An empirical statement is meaningful if it is verifiable or falsifiable by sense-experience.

Judged by the positivistic criterion of meaning religious utterances such as "God exists". "God created the world" and "God loves human beings" are devoid of cognitive meaning, as they are neither analytic statements nor empirical hypotheses. However, a consolation prize is offered to believers and theologians in the form of emotive meaning. Poor creatures. Their forged notes have no cash-value; yet the forged notes have enough value for purchasing illusory commodities and creating a sense of security. Some theologians received the prize with gratitude. W. F. Zuurdeeg<sup>1</sup>, Thomas McPherson<sup>2</sup> and David Coz<sup>3</sup> found the positivistic analysis of meaning in full accord with their theology. Confronted with, what Van Buren<sup>4</sup> calls, "the tyranny of tables and chairs" we hear many new slogans from different quarters: "Christianity without metaphysics", "Christianity without Theology", "Christianity without proposition", "Christological positivism", "Religion without God" etc. One is naturally perplexed and wants to know whether it is an objective analysis of religious language or merely a hasty retreat.

Logical positivism is dead and so is its criterion of meaning; but in spite of Wittgenstein and Austin, the holy ghost of logical positivism still continues to haunt philosophers in the guise of 'cognitive function' of language. Wittgenstein has conclusively shown in the *Philosophical Investigations* that language has many different kinds of

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1. W. F. Zuurdeeg, *A Research for the Consequences of the Vienna Circle Philosophy for Ethics*.
  2. Thomas McPherson, 'Religion as the Inexpressible', *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.
  3. David Cox, 'The significance of Christianity', *Mind*, Vol. LIX, 1950.
  4. Paul Van Buren, 'On Doing Theology', *Talk of God*.



functions to perform, that for a large class of cases the meaning of an expression is its use in the language, and that it is the use of the expression that is important, not meaning. J. L. Austin has carried the linguistic phenomenology a step ahead. First, he made a distinction between "constative" and "performative" utterances. "True" and "false" apply only to the former, the latter being "felicitous" or "infelicitous". But on closer examination the distinction seems to collapse. "Constatives" and "performatives" are similarly tied to the whole situation in which they are uttered. Realizing these difficulties Austin developed his theory of illocutionary forces. When an utterance is made, in the full normal sense, it has a sense and reference (locutionary act)—indicated by its criteria of application—and is used to do some specific act (illocutionary act). What is important, then, is the speech-act. An important consequence of these endeavours is that instead of different types of meaning, we must talk of the uses, functions and purposes of utterances in actual contexts.

Like Cassabianco, the lovers of "cognitive/non-cognitive" are not prepared to leave the burning deck. They try to save it by applying "cognitive" to those speech acts which state or describe something. Even in this stipulative sense the dichotomy of cognitive/non-cognitive is too crude and artificial to get our approval. Excepting mere ejaculations, all other speech sets are cognitive. Even ejaculations are indirectly informative. This is, however, not the whole of story. It may be asked; are there some religious utterances which can genuinely perform the speech act of stating or describing? For a correct answer let us look at some current analysers of religious language.

*Emotive Analysis*: According to logical positivists religious utterances do not state facts. They admit that religious utterances are putative assertions and are intended to state facts, but these utterances express neither empirical nor analytic propositions. They are therefore, devoid of sense. Sometimes God-sentences are connected with order

and harmony in nature and the mental state of a mystic, but if God is "more", they express nothing but emotions<sup>1</sup>. Antony Flew has put a challenge : either specify what occurrences would falsify religious utterances or admit that they are meaningless. Several replies have been given. According to Basil Mitchell<sup>3</sup> religious assertions are relevant to falsification, but the faith of the believer prevents him from abandoning them. In his opinion the problem of evil is a problem because its occurrence tends to falsify some religious assertions. Hare's<sup>4</sup> reply consists in pointing out that every man needs, some basic beliefs which he never allows to be falsified. He has coined "blik" for such beliefs. A blik is not an assertion, but it provides a frame-work within which assertions can be made. Ian Crombie<sup>5</sup> and John Hick<sup>6</sup> have advanced the theory of eschatological verification which is possible, in theory, after death.

If the replies of Mitchell, Crombie and Hick are correct, religious assertions are compatible with some situations and incompatible with others. And this is all that Flew's challenge demands. But some strong objections have been raised which cannot be discussed here. However, to say that religious assertions have emotive meaning amounts to granting them descriptive content. Moreover, the basic error of emotive analysts consists in taking all non-descriptive functions of language to be emotive.

*Conative Analysis :* R. B. Brithwaite, J. H. Randall, Peter Munz, T. R. Miles, P. F. Smidt, Alasdair MacIntyre

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1. A. J. Ayer, *Language Truth and Logic*, Antony Flew, *God and Philosophy*.
  2. Antony Flew, 'Theology and Falsification', *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.
  3. Basil Mitchell, 'Theology and Falsification', *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.
  4. R. M. Hare, 'Theology and Falsification', *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.
  5. I. M. Crombie, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.
  6. John Hick. *Faith and Knowledge*.



and Ronald Hepburn<sup>1</sup> have attempted to show that religious assertions are neither emotive nor descriptive. They can be classified with moral and aesthetic discourse. According to Braithwaite a religious assertion is a moral assertion. It expresses an intention to act in certain ways under certain circumstances. A religious assertion is thus conative. Religious assertions express and recommend a commitment to a certain policy of life. The language of Christianity expresses the intention to follow an *agapeistic* way of life. The assertions "God is love" and "God loves all human beings" are to be understood as recommendations to a life of love for all human beings. Different stories and myths distinguish one religion from other religions and provide a psychological support to ethical recommendations. Ronald Hepburn's view is a refinement of Braithwaite's views. But he correctly realizes that his account is not consistent with Christianity and he boldly rejects it. In the opinion of Randall religious language is symbolic, and the function of religious symbols is to arouse emotions and stir men to action and thereby to strengthen men's practical commitment to what they believe to be right. For Smidt religious assertions cannot be classified with ethical, devotional eschatological and psychological assertions. They are manifestations of attitudes, and attitudes are different from feelings, emotions and beliefs.

It is true that every religion contains a moral code, a pattern of inter-personal behaviour. Some religions are exclusively moral having nothing to do with God. But religious language, so far as theism is concerned, cannot be reduced to secular discourse. In some appropriate contexts indicative sentences are used to perform the speech acts suggested by conative analysts. But this account is not

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1. Braithwaite, *An Empiricist's view of the Nature of Religious Belief*; Randall, *The role of knowledge in Western Religion*; Munz, *Problems of Religious knowledge*; Miles, *Religion and the Scientific Outlook*; Smidt, *Religious Knowledge*, MacIntyre, *Metaphysical Beliefs*; Heplunn, *Christianity and Paradox*.

exhaustive. Moreover, they fail to explain the difference between religious morality and attitude and secular morality and attitude. Their causal explanation of the relation between language and action or attitude is not convincing.

*Regulative Analysis :* Conative analysts are perfectly correct in their analysis of the moral and aesthetic aspects of religious language. But they could not meet the positivist's challenge to show how putative descriptive sentences could state facts and, therefore, they reduced them to moral and aesthetic utterances. This is a clear case of hypocrisy. Regulative analysts tried to do justice with such sentences. We shall consider here Hare, Wisdom and Wittgenstein<sup>1</sup>. According to Hare religious language has an important moral component, but ethical function is not its distinctive feature. "The moral judgements, as we may say, arise out of the religious belief; they do not constitute it"<sup>2</sup>. The distinctive feature of religious utterances is their belief-content. This belief-content is similar to ordinary factual belief in some respects, but it is also radically different from ordinary belief in other respects. A religious assertion is, for Hare, quasi-factual. In his opinion some attitudes, like religious attitudes, must be logically prior to any facts, since "there is no distinction between fact and illusion for a person who does not take up a certain attitude to the world"<sup>3</sup>. Such attitudes are our "bliks" or "onlooks".

Like Hare Wisdom also maintains that facts are irrelevant for religious assertions. They have an "attention-directing" function which is ignored by those who think that "facts" are just given. "What is so isn't merely a matter of the facts"<sup>4</sup>. A religious assertion is not an empirical hypothesis, but it

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1. R. M. Hare, "Religion and Morals", Faith and Logic, ed. Basil Mitchell ; John Wisdom, "God", Logic and Language, Vol. I, Paradox and Discovery ; L. Wittgenstein, Lectures and Conversations on Aesthetics, Psychology and Religious Belief.

2. Hare, "Religion and Morals".

3. Ibid.

4. John Wisdom, "God".



does not mean that "there is no right or wrong about it, no rationality or irrationality, no appropriateness or inappropriateness, no procedure which tends to settle it, nor even that this procedure is in no sense a discovery of new facts"<sup>1</sup>.

Wittgenstein correctly says that in order to understand or participate in religious beliefs one must be trained in the technique of using the appropriate picture or pictures. The picture determines what questions can be asked and what questions cannot be asked, what consequences follow and what consequences do not follow. We must know how the use of an expression in a religious context differs from and resembles with its use in non-religious contexts. For Wittgenstein religious beliefs are unshakeable and are not based on evidence. The indubitability wouldn't be enough to change one's life. Religious assertions have, primarily, what is known as the commissive force. They appear to have a factual element also, but this troublesome problem can be bypassed. There is a logical gap between evidence and belief.

Hare, Wisdom and Wittgenstein have insisted on some fundamental features of religious beliefs. The sentences used to express these beliefs are quasi-factual, and the beliefs themselves are like Kant's regulative ideas. However, one basic issue remains unsettled. Are religious assertions, at any point, linked with reality or not?

*Experiential Analysis* : While the three types of analyses we have discussed attempt to interpret religious language on the models of emotive, conative and regulative utterances, some philosophers have assigned it an independent and unique status. According to J. J. C. Smart<sup>2</sup> and E. L. Allen<sup>3</sup> religious language is "worshipful". In the opinion of Zuurdeeg<sup>4</sup> religious language is neither indicative (referring to the

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1. Ibid.

2. J. J. C. Smart, "The Existence of God", *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*.

3. E. L. Allen, "The Great Argument", *The Expository Times*, 1947.

4. W. F. Zuurdeeg, *An Analytical Philosophy of Religion*.

empirical world) nor analytical (referring to definitions), but convictional. Convictional language refers to reality, but the problem of veracity is out of place here. It refers to "all the reality there is", and, therefore, scientific methods cannot solve its problems.

Ian Ramsey<sup>1</sup> uses a double technique in his analysis of religious discourse, by combining logic and experiential commitment. In theological contexts, says Ramsey, words are taken from non-Theological contexts, and are used in a certain "odd" way, which serves in "evoking the distinctly Theological situation" and expressing the resulting commitment. The very impropriety of religious utterances may cause the "ice to break", the "penny to drop" and reveal a missing "I-Thou" relation from which the total commitment follows as a response to the whole universe. According to Ramsey religious language functions in three ways: first, negatively and negatively until the experience and commitment response are elicited; second, by approaching asymptotically such limiting concepts as "unity", "divine", "perfection" etc.; third, by using logically inappropriate "qualifiers" to simple models drawn from ordinary speech. These techniques make the religious situation "come alive". Such situations are not merely subjective, but have an objective reference or objective depth.

Ian Crombie<sup>2</sup> combines many threads given above. In his opinion logical peculiarities of religious language fix the reference—range of theological discourse. Once the reference range is indicated, the semantic and objective elements of religious utterances become apparent.

We can also mention, briefly, an other slightly different variety of experiential analysis which maintains that religious language is language of encounter<sup>3</sup>. It interprets religious

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1. I. T. Ramsey, *Religious Language*.

2. I. M. Crombie, *Faith and Logic*.

3. E. P. Dickie, *God is Light*; H. H. Farmer, *Revelation and Religion*; C. A. Campbell, *On Selfhood and Godhood*.



utterances as revealing a subject-object relationship in genuine encounter-experiences. According to this view objective reference is part of the experience which is self-verifying. All religious terms are symbolic and literally inapplicable to God. This problem brings us to non-literal techniques of religious language, namely analogy, symbol and myth.

*Analogy, Symbol and Myth* : Unlike emotive, conative and regulative analyses, experiential analysis claims objective reference for religious utterances. But the problem is : how these putative descriptions are to be interpreted ? Scholastic thinkers adopted the idea of analogy to meet this problem. According to Aquinas a term taken from a secular discourse is used to God neither univocally (i.e., in exactly the same sense) nor equivocally (i.e., in a completely different sense). This sort of use of a term is analogical. But the difficulty here is that while in analogies in ordinary discourse both analogates are known, in a religious context God is not known. In the analogy of proportionality there is an additional difficulty because even the property predicated of God is unknown. For these reasons E. L. Mascall and Dorothy Emmet have criticised the analogical use of terms in relation to God. These difficulties, however, can be met by conceding that analogies do not give us knowledge of God's actions, but merely prescribe formal rules of application for the terms predicated of God whose existence is presupposed. For the propositional content we must turn to symbols and myths.

Religious language is logically symbolic. A symbol is taken from the realm of ordinary experience but it is used to symbolize something which is not directly comprehensible, by altering or even distorting the ordinary meaning of the symbol. According to Paul Tillich a symbol "participates in that to which it points"<sup>1</sup>. A symbol "opens up levels of reality which otherwise are closed to us"<sup>2</sup>. In the symbolic

1. Paul Tillich, *Dynamics of Faith*, p. 42.

2. *Ibid.*, p. 42.

use of language two problems must be solved. First, the sense of a symbolic assertion must be specificable by some non-symbolic assertions. Tillich realizes it and says that there is one literal assertion that God is Being-itself. Second, there must be some rich field of imagery which can provide material for religious symbolism. Myth is such a field.

As Urban<sup>1</sup> has correctly pointed out religious language is both poetic and dramatic. The dramatic aspect is concerned with myths. Ordinarily myth is defined as a story, the spontaneous product of unreflective and uncritical consciousness, but this is not correct. As Berdyaev points out "behind myth are concealed the greatest realities, the original phenomena of the spiritual life"<sup>2</sup>. Myth is neither illusion nor fiction but embodies a fundamental belief concerning the nature of reality. Its true form is symbolic not pictorial. Cassirer, Langer, Kristensen, Eliade, Hidding and Merleau-Ponty have interpreted it symbolically. Even when mythical language is picture language and story language, the suggestion is symbolic.

It is said that the stories of the Bible such as those of the creation, about Adam and Eve, about Abraham and Moses are myths, and the language of confessions is kerygmatic: Rudolf Bultmann has made the problem of interpretation acute. His general thinking is that the mythical or historical element can be scraped, but the message of the Bible, its kerygma is essential and must be retained. In a little book entitled *Jesus* Bultmann interprets the gospel in existential terms. What matters is not something that Jesus did objectively outside us. Jesus is a preacher of the Word, summoning men to decision, and thus enabling us "to interpret our own existence". In his essay "New Testament and Mythology"<sup>3</sup> and *Jesus Christ and Mythology* and other works Bultmann developed his thesis in a more radical

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1. W. M. Urban, *Humanity and Deity*.

2. N. Berdyaev, *Freedom and The Spirit*.

3. *Kerygma and Myth*, ed. H. W. Bartsch.



form. Bultmann's point is that mythology was not confined simply to isolated events, the whole thought-form of The New Testament was mythological. However, he does not favour a total rejection of the myths. He intends to re-interpret them in existential terms under the influence of Heidegger. "The real purpose of myth", he writes, "is not to present an objective picture of the world as it is, but to express man's understanding of himself in the world in which lives"<sup>1</sup>. This is the meaning of his demythologization of the Christian message. When it is done, for example, the fall has nothing to do with Adam. It is essentially a picture of man's selfassertion<sup>2</sup>. Bultmann interprets almost everything in the New Testament existentially, but not so the central claim of the kerygma itself, the claim that God decisively acted in Christ.

According to some critics Bultmann's attempt is a total failure. But others, for example, Fritz Buri, have taken the kerygma too as material for existential analysis. Bonhoeffer interprets the Bible in a non-religious sense. Robinson interprets God not as a "being up there" but "deep down things". Paul Van Buren, Gabriel Vahanian, Harvey Cox and J. J. Alitzer have interpreted Christianity in purely secular terms.

What is our reaction to these moves? To put the matter briefly: There are two ways of looking at both myths and kerygma: literally and symbolically. Taken literally both are unacceptable to modern man, but they can be, and for certain purposes must be saved, if we interpret them symbolically. But if the symbolic interpretation is not consistent with the basic theistic models of a particular religion, it ceases to be an objective interpretation of that particular religious faith, but functions as recommendation for a new religion, a new creed. A myth is replaced by an other myth. Myth taken symbolically gives a descriptive

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1. Kerygma and Myth, p. 110.

2. Ibid., p. 30.

content to mere abstractions, and is more intelligible to unsophisticated and simple believers. Symbols and myths are necessary for an effective and forceful expression of religious beliefs and experiences. It is true that simple and unreflective people take religious myths literally, but with the growth of religious consciousness their symbolic suggestion becomes explicit.

*Retrospect* : We have discussed some basic approaches to the problem of religious language. We have found that religious language is very complex and includes all sorts of assertions used in natural languages, some of which are these : poetic, dramatic, figurative, symbolic, analogical, mythical and parabolic assertions; exclamations and ejaculations; injunctions, commands, recommendations and prescriptions; and simple and general statements. The nature of the last two is most troublesome. What are they intended to do? And do they succeed in their intended functions? Suppose not. What is then, their analysis? According to logical positivists they resemble exclamations, in function, and have only emotive meaning. In the opinion of conative analysts, in spite of being indicative, these assertions are only prescriptions or commands. But the regulative analysts assign them a quasi-cognitive status. They do not state facts, but unshakeable beliefs, norms or points of significance. Experiential analysts them full cognitive significance or in the terminology of Ian Ramsey "empirical anchorage".

Religion intends to provide a basic and all pervasive scheme for life. It naturally contains moral and other values and some basic beliefs in the light of which everything else gains significance. Every religion seeks to inculcate certain basic attitudes in the followers of the religion, and tries to evoke unique religious experiences which are not ordinary poetic emotions. But utterances which are used to express and evoke emotions and feelings, or prescriptions and recommendation, or guiding beliefs and patterns can do so, if, and only if, they have descriptive content or criteria of use. Excepting such expressions as "Oh", and "Damn" 'all



illocutionary speech acts presuppose locutionary acts. Moreover, at the theoretical level, religious experiences and emotions, values and patterns presuppose the existence of that towards which they are directed. If any theory of religious language fails to account for this factor, it is unsatisfactory and untenable.

*Prospect* : Religious language is not only complex but also irritating, at least for a sympathetic outsider as I am. My main task in this final section is to elucidate the grammar of the religious assertions which are intended to state something and have the form of statements. I want to make it clear, at the outset, that the following questions are misleading. What is the function of all statements? Are they all truth-claiming? What is their logic? And so on. The form of a sentence tells us nothing. Its function can be known by looking at the context. No analysis is possible out of all contexts. Take, for example, the assertion "God loves human beings". It may be used to assure oneself or others, or to encourage a believer, or to prescribe a course of action, or to worship, adore and commit oneself to God, or to express religious feelings and experiences, or to feel secure, or to pray or to express gratitude, or to describe God or to ascribe love to God, or to assert some sort of relationship with God or to reject one's faith in God, or as a satire or to evaluate some experiences. The list is by no means exhaustive. The second thing that I want to insist is that the use of a religious assertion is also dependent on the speaker's level of religious consciousness. The same religious assertion can be used in different senses and for different functions depending on the speaker's concept of Deity. When a primitive man or an unsophisticated man makes the assertion "God loves human beings" he uses it as an empirical statement. He ascribes both love and anger to God. He believes that sometimes God loves him, sometimes punishes him, and sometimes is just indifferent. A man of developed religious consciousness does not ascribe anger to God and, therefore, makes his statement significant by maintaining that evil and suffering

are not entirely pointless. A man totally committed to God receives everything as His will. At this level the assertion becomes an expression of faith. And a theologian defines love as a form of perfection, and the assertion "God loves human beings" becomes an analytic statement. Other statements can be understood similarly.

It becomes clear now that in every theistic religion a threefold strategy is adopted, which consists of empirical assertions, assertions of faith and analytic assertions. The same sentence is used at all the three levels. There is no absurdity here. "All men are mortal" can be interpreted both as an empirical statement and as an analytic statement. When an assertion expresses a belief which is compatible with everything it functions like a statement used to describe the events of a closed universe. There is no problem of meaning either at the experiential level or at the conceptual level (I am not raising here the problem of truth). Only the level of faith seems to be unmanageable. However, at all levels the descriptive content is derived from and dependent on secular, parabolic and mythical discourse.

Back to the level of faith. When it is said "God loves...", "God creates...", "God acts..." what is actually intended? In my opinion these utterances are not assertions of facts but ascriptions of attributes. Religious language, where it seems to be descriptive, is really *ascriptive*. No one has ever claimed to know God. Man only ascribes to God whatever seems noble and valuable to him. This also shows why, some attributes are negated of him. Both affirmation and negation take place on the ground of faith, and their connection with secular discourse makes both affirmative and negative assertions meaningful. Ascriptions are understood analogically and symbolically, not literally. And some theological philosophers who are not satisfied with even analogical and symbolic ascription negate all predicates of God. This account, with certain reservations, can be applied to other two levels also. Ascriptions are adequate or inadequate, appropriate or inappropriate, good or bad, but not true or false in the strictly empirical sense.



But the problem of reference still remains. Any normal utterance whether it expresses emotions, feelings and attitudes, or a moral policy, or a belief, or an experience of something going beyond the states of mind, or description and ascription, or commitment presupposes a referent, actual or possible; which it points to or follows from. If an expression lacks criteria of reference, it still retains some vague and imprecise sense as an idle or spurious assertion, but it cannot perform the intended functions. This difficulty is most acute in those religions which posit a transcendent being "up there", as in Christianity. Mere symbolism is not enough. There must be some literal assertions which can provide a solid foundation to the edifice of symbolism. This is why some contemporary Christian Theologians have boldly rejected the idea of a being "up there". The true being, as they say, is "deep within" to be encountered in personal experience in "disclosure" or "discernment" situations. Some of them, for example, Paul Tillich, make this literal assertion: "God is Being—itself". Unfortunately "Being itself" is not like "Blueness-itself". These Theologians have failed to provide any criterion for determining whether such experiences are verifical or not. To say that these experiences are self-verificatory or coercive is not the least convincing. I find only three alternatives : (i) Delimitation of God (both "up there" and "deep within")—Confucianism, Jainism, Sāṅkhya, Hīnayāna Buddhism and secular Christian Theologians. (ii) identification of God with some unique religious experience (whether the word "God" or its equivalents are used or not)—Mahāyāna Buddhism—, and (iii) identification of God with the self—Advaita Vedānta. According to Advaita Vedānta "God is self" and "Self is God" are the only possible literal assertions. Other statements are merely ascriptions of attributes for the sake of worship. I do not say that this theory is correct. If the concept of the self is based on logical errors and conceptual muddles, it must be rejected. But I do maintain that it successfully solves the problem of reference which is necessary for meaningful discourse.

# HOPING AND WISHING

By

R. C. GANDHI

## I

What is the difference between hoping and believing? One cannot say: "I believe that *p*, although I have not done very much in the way of acquainting myself with evidence for the truth of '*p*' ". But one *can*: "I hope that *p*, although I have not done very much in the way of acquainting myself with evidence for the truth of '*p*' ". However, perhaps one cannot say: "I hope that *p* although I have done *nothing* in the way of acquainting myself with evidence for the truth of '*p*' ". Could one say: There *must* be *some* basis for hoping that *p*, but "grounds for hoping that *p*" need not be as strong as "grounds or reasons for believing that *p*"?

## II

The very fact that I say that I hope that *p* and not that I believe that *p* indicates the relative weakness of whatever evidential support there is, if there *is* any, for my hope that *p*, compared to the strength of the evidential support that would be required if I were to *believe* that *p*.

## III

But does this mean that hoping is merely "weak believing"? This cannot be the whole story. Weak believing would express itself in other forms: e.g. in the form of the following expressions: "I am inclined to think that *p*." "It seems to me that *p*." "I have the feeling that *p*" and so on.



## IV

There seems to be an extra element in hoping. Perhaps this is wishing. And perhaps wishing is part of hoping because of the latter's weak evidential support. I will return to this point later.

## V

Consider again the suggestion that hoping is "weak believing." I think one could argue against this suggestion in the following way. One can say that while hoping that  $p$  ( or that it would be the case that  $p$  -- I have ignored the latter, perhaps more apposite, explication of hoping for the sake of convenience ) certainly does involve a *look* at evidential considerations of a kind which would incline one to think or believe that  $p$ , there is also involved in hoping that  $p$  a tacit acknowledgement of the existence of evidential considerations which would incline one to think that *not- $p$* . Hoping necessarily goes hand in hand with fearing that what is hoped for may not turn out to be the case. This being so, one cannot speak of "grounds for hoping" at all.

## VI

Although *hoping* is not at all like *believing*, it is a phenomenon which is suffused with inductive considerations. This is what makes it difficult to see its true character. For instance, it seems to me a necessary condition of my hoping that  $p$  that I should be able in principle to specify the general nature of the *kinds* of conditions that would have to be fulfilled for it to be the case that  $p$ , and also the general nature of the kinds of conditions the fulfilment of which would bring it about that *not- $p$* . It would, for example, be odd for me to say "I hope that it rains this evening, although I cannot, even in principle, specify the general nature of the kinds of conditions that would have to be fulfilled for this to be the case." It is in this respect that hoping differs from pure wishing. For me to wish that it would be the case that  $p$ , it is *not* necessary that I should be able, even in principle, to specify the kinds of conditions the fulfilment of which would bring it about that  $p$ . Wishing lacks the kind of inductive context that hoping necessarily requires.

## VII

Difference of context apart, there is a very close relationship between hoping and wishing. One can argue that my hoping that *p* involves a double act of wishing. An act of wishing that the conditions that favour the coming into being of the state of affairs represented by "*p*" *would* obtain, and also an act of wishing that conditions that do not favour the coming into being of the state of affairs represented by "*p*" *would not* obtain.

## VIII

Perhaps an analysis of my hoping that *p* into a double-act of wishing together with a specification of the inductive context of my hope would be a sufficiently perspicuous analysis of my hoping that *p*.

## IX

In spite of what I have said above, I think it is the case that the notion of hoping is often used in the sense of "weak believing." When a doctor says, about a patient, that his condition is not hopeless, what he means is that there *are* grounds, although not strong, for thinking or suspecting that the patient may pull through. The doctor, *in* saying that the condition of the patient is not hopeless, does not wish that the patient would pull through. The doctor may even be an ill-wisher of the patient and *not* wish that the patient would pull through. I think one can say that the notion of hoping is being employed in its "weak believing" sense when what we are confronted with are locutions, or variations of locutions, of the form "There is hope that *p*." But when we are confronted with locutions of the form "I hope that *p*", then the notion of hoping that is being employed is one which lends itself to being analysed into the notion of a wish or the notion of a complex of wishes.

## X

When someone says "There is hope that *p*", the question "What are your grounds for saying that there is hope that *p*?",



and also the question "What are your grounds for hoping that  $p$ ?" are legitimate questions. So I was wrong in suggesting that the notion of "grounds for hoping" has no application. It has no application only in those cases where we are confronted with locutions of the form "I hope that  $p$ ." So we have the "weak believing" sense of hoping as exemplified in locutions of the form "There is hope that  $p$ " and the 'wishing' sense of hoping as exemplified in locutions of the form "I hope that  $p$ ." Let us call these senses  $H_1$  and  $H_2$ .

### XI

When the doctor says "The patient's condition is not hopeless", does he merely mean that there is a finite, as opposed to nil, probability that the patient will come through? No. I think a minimally adequate probabilistic basis is essential here.

### XII

When a man says in despair "There is no hope for me", what does he mean? I think what he means is that even "weak belief" that he will overcome his despair is not available to him. Of course, in sense  $H_2$  he could still hope. He can say "I hope I will be all right." But notice how close such hoping is to wishing.

### XIII

What is it to "hope against hope?" When a man says "I am hoping against hope that my friend will regain consciousness", what does he mean? Clearly he is not "weakly believing." Nor is he hoping in the sense of pure wishing. I think the situation is as follows. There is a finite, as opposed to nil, probability of his friend regaining consciousness and our man founds a "groundless", "unreasonable" (but not logically absurd), expectation of this finite probability coming off. This is yet another form of hoping. Let us call this "sense  $H_3$ " of hoping.

### XIV

It is quite clear that hoping in sense  $H_3$  would also include a strong element of wishing (Wishing can be present even in

hoping of the  $H_1$  kind, but not necessarily). If I am hoping of the  $H_1$  kind, but not necessarily). If I am hoping against hope that  $p$ , I am also wishing that the tiny probability which supports my unreasonable expectation would come off. Also hoping in sense  $H_2$  can—probably always does—include hoping of kind  $H_3$  i.e. unreasonable" expectation. So that it would be a mistake to describe hoping in sense  $H_2$  as being an instance of "pure" wishing.

## XV

What sort of hoping is involved in religious, more particularly theistic, hoping? Say the hope that one's personality would not be obliterated by death, that the injustices of this world would be put right in another, "transcendent", world? Let us consider various possibilities, (a) Can we say that the theist who hopes that he would survive death can express his hope in the form "There is hope that I will survive death?" This is hoping in sense  $H_1$ , i.e. the sense of weak believing. I do not think the theist can hope in this way. The doctor who says "There is hope for the patient" has a fairly clear notion of the general nature of the kinds of conditions (upon the fulfilment of which the survival of the patient depends) he regards as not being utterly improbable, although not bright. The theist, on the other hand, can specify no such condition whatever, conditions with regard to which there is general or specialist knowledge. His hoping is an instance of pure wishing.

(b) Can we say that the theist hopes in sense  $H_3$  i.e. in the sense of "hoping against hope?" I do not think so. When I hope against hope that a friend would regain consciousness, I know that science can provide a fairly clear characterization of the wildly improbable conditions the fulfilment of which alone can save my friend. But the theist is here again at a loss to specify the nature of the conditions upon the fulfilment of which he purports to base his "hope against hope." The conclusion again seems irresistible that the theist is merely wishing.

(c) Can we say that the theist is hoping in sense  $H_2$ ? But as I suggested in section XIV, hoping in sense  $H_2$  probably



necessarily involves hoping in sense  $H_3$ —i.e. “hoping against hope.” And this the theist cannot do if my account of “hoping against hope” is correct. Again the conclusion forces itself upon us that the theist is not hoping at all, he is merely wishing. Wishing that it would be the case that  $p$  does not necessarily require that the person who wishes that it would be the case that  $p$  should be able to specify, even in principle, the general nature of the kinds of conditions the fulfilment of which would bring it about that  $p$  (although, often, such specification would be possible). But wishing, unlike hoping, does not *call* for such specification of conditions.

## XVI

If what I have been saying about the nature of hoping is sound, then it becomes quite clear that the theist's charge that the non-theist has no basis for hoping (transcendentally) becomes quite meaningless. Transcendental hoping turns out to be a case of pure wishing and wishing is no monopoly of theists.

## XVII

What is it to wish that something would be the case? First of all notice that while locutions of the form “I hope that it would rain” can be replaced without loss of meaning by locutions of the form “I hope that it will rain”, locutions of the form “I wish that it would rain” *cannot* be replaced by locutions of the form “I wish that it will rain.” I think this point is of more than mere grammatical interest. It suggests, I think, that the object of wishing is not propositional in character. “It would happen”, unlike “It will happen”, is not a proposition. For this reason there can be no illuminating comparison of wishing with believing, thinking, even hoping, etc. The notion of “grounds for wishing” makes no sense at all.

## XVIII

Can we say that the force of “I wish it were (would be) the case that  $p$ ” is the same as the force of “Would that it were the

case that  $p$ ”? I think so, and this equation clearly brings out the non-inductive character of wishing. But is the optative form *Would* that it were the case that  $p$ ” perspicuous? Does it simply amount to the expression of a feeling of regret (that it is not the case that  $p$ ) combined with the envisaging of a desired state of affairs which is represented by “ $p$ ”?

## XIX

I think when I wish that it were the case that  $p$ , I do more than merely envisage a desired state of affairs (Incidentally this envisaging does not—in the case of wishing—necessarily require ability to specify the nature of the kinds of conditions that would bring about the desired state of affairs). I think wishing that it were the case that  $p$  involves, necessarily, the thinking of the thought “Let it be the case that  $p$ ”. It would be self-contradictory to assert “I wish that it were the case that  $p$ , but let it not be the case that  $p$ ”. But what is the force of the locution “Let it be the case that  $p$ ”. In a communicative situation, this locution would have an unavoidable imperatival force, e. g. : “Let this man go”. But what is the role of the *thought* “Let it be the case that  $p$ ”, and what is the force of the locution “I wish it were the case that  $p$ ”? Let us consider the thought first. “Let it be the case that  $p$ ”—as a thought—is, I have suggested, the force-bearer of the act of wishing that it were the case that  $p$ . I suggest that thinking the thought “Let it be the case that  $p$ ” has the following function : It amounts to an act of imagining that one was issuing an imperative of the general form “Make it the case that  $p$ ” to an imagined suitable audience. What I mean by a “suitable” audience will become clear with the aid of an example. Suppose I wish that it would rain now. This, according to my suggestion, involves thinking the thought “Let it rain”, and *this*, in its turn, amounts to imagining that one was issuing the general imperative “Make it rain”, to an audience to whom one imaginatively attributed rain-making powers. Of course, if I actually believed in the existence of a rain-god, e.g. Indra, then I would, in wishing that it would rain, think that I was *actually*, although only in my heart,



praying to Indra for rain. 'This presupposes a view of the nature of communication which does not require, as a matter of logical necessity, that the being addressed by me should, at least sometimes, communicatively respond to me or to beings like myself. In my view this is an erroneous view of the nature of communication and convinces me that the correct analysis of wishing must be one which describes the act of wishing as an essentially imaginative act of communication. Of course, the imagined audience would still have to be "suitable". So the *idea* of someone like Indra would have to be logically necessarily available to me if my act of wishing that it would rain is to have any definition). Given the erroneous view of the nature of communication to which I have alluded in parenthesis, it would be natural for my silent prayer to spill over into the world as an articulated (and culturally defined) ritual act of prayer. What I am saying is that the logical possibility of there being something like prayer depends upon the act of wishing having a certain structure.

## XX

Wishing minimally requires unconscious mythologization or anthropomorphization of nature (e.g. of rain-producing elements). It can (assisted by a certain erroneous view of the nature of communication) generate the institution of prayer (where audiences are superhuman). Also we can selfconsciously engage in the act of imaginative communication which is wishing. Indeed, so long as we are unable to dispense with the notion of wishing in our lives, we cannot avoid engaging in this act.

## XXI

Suppose you have cigarettes and I know that you have them and you know that I know that you have them, and suppose I say the following to you: "I wish I could have a cigarette." You would, I think, interpret my remark as a quasi-imperative addressed to you (unless for some reason you and I were on non-cigarette-offering terms). It is interesting to see why you would interpret my remark in this way. I suggest the following:

explanation : You (correctly) interpret my remark as an act (verbalized) of imagining that I was addressing the imperative "Let me have a cigarette." to a suitable audience. And since you *are* a suitable audience and you know that I know this, you interpret my remark as an act of imagining that I was asking somebody who came under the same description as you for a cigarette. So you take the hint and offer me a cigarette (If you want to. At any rate you interpret my remark imperatively). Of course, you would have to find reason to believe that some inhibition or other prevented me from translating my imaginative act of communication into a real one. I think these facts are evidence in favour of my analysis of wishing.

## XXII

Of course, in prayer there is belief in the existence of the being prayed to. *But not in his existence as a communicative respondent.* So *qua* putative act of communication, prayer remains an imaginative act of communication. (It is not of course at all necessary that this fact would be obvious to the man who is praying<sup>1</sup>. The appropriateness of the being to whom prayer is addressed (the suitability of the anthropomorphization) is not determined by the being's communicative responsiveness. Other criteria are employed. Alleged ability to bring about desired—prayed for—states of affairs, for instance. Also, an imaginative act of communication does not require a communicative response. Thus the force of prayer and the force of an imaginative act of communication—the former being taken as an putative act of communication—is the same.

## XXIII

The above remarks about prayer are not reductionist in character in the important sense that they make the point that the logical structure of wishing and praying is the same.

## XXIV

Our criterion for saying that somebody wants to do some thing, e.g. X, is that he is exhibiting behaviour, or incipient



behaviour, of a kind which is connected with the phenomenon which might be called "the doing of X." In other words : his employment of, or disposition to employ, causally or communicatively efficacious means for doing X. (There remains an ineliminable type-difference between these two sorts of means, although often the strategy of employing communicative means would be causally efficacious. "In telling you to do X I am not, in general, trying to *get you to do X*"). What is our criterion for saying that somebody wishes that it were the case that *p*? I think this must be : his imaginative employment of fancied causally or communicatively efficacious means for bringing about the state of affairs represented by "*p*". This might take the form of pseudo-causal activity ranging from highly institutionalized ritual to self-conscious but fanciful "straining of all one's nerves" to, for instance, "make" the car stop when the brakes have failed. Or it might involve activity ranging from highly institutionalized utterance of prayer to selfconscious but imaginative acts of communication directed towards suitable imagined audiences.

## XXV

The fancied causally or communicatively efficacious means whose imaginative employment is essential for wishing may, in different circumstances, be actually efficacious. Suppose I wish I were *now* in the kitchen of my house (miles away) in order to be able to turn off the stove which I have forgotten to turn off. I would, in so wishing, be imaginatively employing such fancied causally or communicatively efficacious means as picturing that I am holding the knob which turns off the stove by being turned right, or picturing that I am telling my wife to turn off the stove. Now these imagined activities would, in other circumstances, be actually efficacious. The point about wishing that has to be made in this : Even where I lack knowledge of the kinds of means which would be efficacious in bringing about a desired state of affairs, I must, if I wish that state of affairs to obtain, *imagine* that I possess this knowledge and fancifully employ what really must be pseudo-causal or pseudo-communicative means. This is both

possible as a self-conscious piece of play, as well as a highly institutionalized (where the imaginative character of the expression of wishing is lost sight of) form of pseudo-causal or pseudo-communicative ritual.

## XXVI

I would like to take back some of the things I have said about hoping in sense  $H_2$ , i.e. in the sense in which it is exhibited in locutions of the form "I hope that  $p$ ." I have said (section V) that such hoping necessarily involves a *look* at evidential considerations which might incline one to think or believe that  $p$ , and also a tacit acknowledgement of evidential consideration which would incline one to think or believe that *not*- $p$ . I do not now think that this must be so. I can say "I hope that  $p$ " even in circumstances where I have no access to evidence of any sort for the truth or falsity of  $p$ . But I cannot seriously and sincerely say "I hope that  $p$ " without acknowledging that *in principle* relevant evidence for the truth or falsity of " $p$ " should be accessible—to me or to others. It is *this* fact which makes it impossible for theistic hope to express itself in the form "I hope that  $p$ ". I think I was also wrong in saying (section XIV)—because, again, of the possibility of somebody seriously and sincerely saying "I hope that  $p$ " in conditions such as the one I have described above—that hoping in sense  $H_2$  probably always involves hoping in sense  $H_3$  i.e. "hoping against hope". "Hoping against hope that  $p$ " involves the acknowledgement of the existence of a finite, although insignificant, probability of it being the case that  $p$ —something which too would require access to evidential considerations of some sort or other. But such access may not be there at all, and yet it may be proper to hope in sense  $H_2$ . But my point is that even in such circumstances, hoping would require the acknowledgement, in principle, of the possibility of access to relevant evidence.

## XXVII

My analysis of the mental act of wishing would explain the *prima facie* inexplicable fact that the *mere fact* of my having a



certain wish, the public avowal and attempted fulfilment of which are socially taboo, can make me feel guilty, even if I make no avowal of my wish and do not seek to fulfil it in any way. Let my wish that it were the case that  $p$  be such a wish. Now if my analysis of wishing is correct, my wishing that it were the case that  $p$  would necessarily involve my *imagining* THAT I am addressing the hypothetical imperative "If anyone is able and willing to make it the case that  $p$ , let him do so.", to the entire class of agents in the universe. That is to say, it would involve my imagining that I have made a public avowal of my wish. Guilt-feelings would naturally emerge. I am assuming that I would feel guilty if I made a public avowal of my wish. Given this assumption, my analysis of wishing shows that there is a necessary connection between my wish that it were the case that  $p$  and my feeling guilty.

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# REFERENCE, MODALITY AND VEDĀNTIC USAGE

*by*

MISS S. MAJUMDAR

Vedāntic usage is based on upaniṣadic revelation. Usage based on this Brāhmanical faith includes the following chief tenets—The reality of Brahman, identity between Brahman and Ātman, theory of creation, law of Karma, doctrine of rebirth and the doctrine of Mukti. Objectivity claim and Truth claim are crucial to this faith. Is this claim justified? How this usage is relevant and intelligible?

Brāhmanical faith asserts the sole reality of Brahman. Cultural heritage of Hindus has assigned supreme status to this Vedānta ontology. "What ontology actually to adopt stands open and the obvious counsel is tolerance and experimental spirit"<sup>1</sup> says Quine.

We may formulate the Vedānta position thus—'Everything is Brahman and Brahman is saccidananda.'

Is quantification of this sentence possible?

B # Brahman.

S # Saccidananda

Can we say? (X) (BX). (X) (BX  $\supset$  SX).

What counts as value for the variable "X"?

"To be is to be the the value of a variable"<sup>2</sup> says Quine.

Quantification is construed a good test for the examination of the reference claim of expressions. Does this test apply in the above case?

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1 & 2. "What there is" by Quine. W. V. p. 552 & 554. New Readings in Philosophical Analysis, ed. by Sellars Feigl & Lehrer.



According to Quine the objects of whatever sort, which the singular terms in their several ways refer to, which the variables take as values—they are what count as cases, when quantifying we say that everything or something is thus and so. Primary objects answering to this description are spatio-temporal particulars. In Quine's view these particulars do not merely happen to count as objects, they are the very patterns of objects. The fundamental distinction between singular term in referential and general term in predicative position supports this view.

When entities other than spatio-temporal particulars qualify as objects, they do so on account of the fact that our talk confers upon them the limited and purely logical analogy with such particulars.

In accepting entities on this logical test, if we claim for them any further likeness to such particular than the logical analogy itself contains, we should be running into danger of committing a serious mistake of category confusion.

"Brahman" is a singular term, yet it is so very unlike other singular terms. Does it denote a thing or it refers to a property? If it refers to neither or to both in what manner it does so is to be shown. The term "Brahman" is a unique singular term. It does not refer to any ordinary particular-thing or property. The intended object designated by "Brahman" is not this being or that being, but a unique category of reality—the Being is denoted by this singular term. It is due to this that no logical analogy can be said to hold between Brahman and other singular terms. Any artificial attempt to stretch analogy in this direction is to run into the danger of committing the mistake of category confusion. Hence quantification test fails to apply in this case. Reference claim remains unexplained and unjustified.

## II

When we look at traditional philosophy we get logic committed to ontology. The existence of Brahman is not at par with the existence of other things.

In Upanisadic view Brahman is the Paramārtha Satya, while the world is only empirically real (Vyāvahārika Satya). Two famous arguments were advanced to establish the reality of Brahman.

(1) Janmādyasya Yataḥ (B. S. I. 1.2) (Brahman is that omniscient, omnipotent all powerfull being)—from whom proceed the origin (sustenance and dissolution) of this (world).

(2) Śāstrayonitvāt (B. S. I. 1.3).

The scriptures (alone) being the source of right knowledge (with respect to Brahman), the scriptural text is proof of Brahman.

On the basis of these two arguments Brahman is considered the causal ground of the phenomenal world.

The necessity of Brahman as the causal ground of the world appearance is affirmed.

We may formulate the affirmation.

Necessarily Brahman exists.

Necessarily everything is Brahman.

□ Everything is Brahman.

Does the context of necessity justify the reference claim of the expression? Let us examine further.

Necessarily and possibly are the two primary modal operators, these are mere modes of specifying expressions and assertions. Hence the modal context of necessity can not offer any definite illumination with regard to referential claim of the expression. In Quine's words "the context of modality is afflicted with referential opacity."<sup>1</sup>

Quantification is a good test for the examination of the claim. Is quantification in modal context plausible? Some logicians accept quantified modal logic. "An effective way of reconciling quantification and modality is by adherence to an intensional ontology, with extrusion of extensional entities altogether from the range of values of the variables"<sup>2</sup> says Quine.

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1 & 2. "Reference & Modality" by Quine. W. V. p. 20 & p. 5, in *Reference and Modality* ed. by Linsky.



The acceptance of quantified modal logic thus commits logicians to Aristotelian essentialism, which holds that necessary and contingent traits do belong to objects irrespective of their modes of specification.

Scriptural authority renders "Brahman" intelligible in terms of two definitions—the *Taṭastha lakṣaṇa* and the *Svarūpa lakṣaṇa*.

The understanding of "Brahman" in terms of *Svarūpa lakṣaṇa* i.e. Brahman is *saccidānanda*, leads one at the outset to commit to the belief of essentialism. If Brahman can be conceived in terms of its determinate essence then adherence to intensional ontology may be a success.

But closer examination reveals that *sat*, *cit* and *ānanda* are not the necessary properties of Brahman, the relation is not of *dharma* and *dharmī*, attribute and substance. The predicates are at par with the subject. Brahman is existence, Brahman is consciousness and Brahman is bliss. These are modes of specification, further these are not positive modes of specification but in the ultimate analysis turn into description of Brahman via *negativa*—*sat* is *asadvyāvartaka*, *cit* is *jaḍatva-vyāvartaka* and *ānanda* is *duḥkḥavyāvartaka*. We are ultimately left with an absolutely indeterminate Brahman.

Thus commitment to essentialism does not help here. We cannot adhere to intensional ontology, hence the possibility of reconciliation between quantification and modality failed. This failure keeps the aspirant in darkness regarding the reference of "Brahman."

### III

*Mahāvākyas* enjoy a significant status in Upaniṣadic discourse. Most crucial ones are the following identity statements.

(1) I am He (It) *So'ham*.

(2) Thou art that (*Śvetaketu*).

*Tattvamasi Śvetaketo*.

(3) *Ahaṁ Brahmāsmi*—I am Brahman.

The truth of these identity statements is revealed in the context of scriptural narratives. The terms between which identity relation is asserted are pronouns—That, Thou, I and He (It) and the noun-Brahman. These pronouns however are not logically analogous to ordinary pronouns, which stand for ordinary particulars—things or persons. It is legitimate to argue that one of the relata in both the assertions is an ordinary pronoun—I and thou both refer to ordinary individuals the speaker or the hearer.

But to understand the reference of these two terms in ordinary sense will be misleading. These terms in scriptural contexts imply a unique category of reality. The Ātman—which is intelligible in terms of its intension given in the text only.

I and thou are thus not ordinary pronouns, they denote a concept.

Regarding the other terms—that and He (It) we may again say these are far from ordinary pronouns. By these pronouns scriptures intend a unique category of reality—i.e. Brahman, Brahman is rendered intelligible in terms of definitions—mentioned above. Hence Brahman is a concept.

The relation of identity holds between concepts. These identity statements therefore are based on analyticity. These sentences are definitionally true.

#### IV

Next we come to consider the status of religious doctrines. The status of a theory is very different from the status of a particular statement. A theory explains phenomena, a statement states a fact.

The truth of a statement is determined by its correspondence to a particular state of affairs. The worth of a theory is decided by its spirit of tolerating critical test.

Refutability is considered the mark of success for a theory. Scientific theories are refutable. Popper's falsification criterion<sup>1</sup> demarcates between science and pseudo science.

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1. Die Logik der Forsduing : Popper. K.



Religious theories along with metaphysical theories are irrefutable. These theories are too general to account for any and every situation. All empirical diversity in births etc. is accounted for by the law of Karma. Belief in Punarjanma encourages and justifies all good actions and accumulation of merits.

Since these theories explain too much, their worth in the capacity of theories is reduced. These theories are not subject to critical examination, anything and everything is compatible with these. Hence these theories can not compete with scientific theories. These theories are relevant and better suited in the contexts of propositional attitudes, "unaware of", "believing", "denying" etc. Propositional attitudes are also called quasi modal contexts. Thus we may get the following sentences.

- (1) A Christian is unaware of the law of karma.
- (2) Each Hindu is aware of the doctrine of rebirth.
- (3) Advaitin denies Brahma-pariṇāma-vāda.
- (4) Advaitin affirms Brahma-vivartavāda.
- (5) A Hindu believes that mokṣa is the sumum bonum of life.

"Believing" is the very pattern of all propositional attitudes. In the contexts of propositional attitudes we are not concerned with the exclusive truth of the doctrines. We may say that these contexts share referential opacity with modal contexts. These sentences assert a relation between the person (believer, denier...) and the content, that is believed, disbelieved, or denied etc. This believed content may also be expressed in a subordinate sentence related by a that clause, and then the relation is said to hold between the believer and the intension of the subordinate sentences.

In the above sentences we are not concerned with the truth or the explanatory capacity of the theories. In this respect the contexts of propositional attitudes are similar to modal contexts.

From these considerations we conclude that Vedāntic usage is relevant and meaningful in the context of faith. The significance of faith is in shaping the cultural life of the people.

# RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

By

Y. MASIH

1. *Statement of the problem* : I shall be confining myself to religious language concerning God. God for me is essentially transcendent, but He is related to the world and man. Naturally for me the problem does not refer to Nirvanist statement, the paradigm instances of which are found in Jainism, Hinayani Buddhism and Shankarite Advaitism.

2. *Main Issues* : For me main issues concerning God-statements relate to their cognitiveness. Only when God-statements as cognitive are shown to be absurd, self-contradictory and literally meaningless, then their meaning is sought as noncognitive. If God-statements be non-cognitive, then they can be understood as Blik-statements (R. M. Hare), or as moral statements energised by stories (R. B. Braithwaite), or as analogical statement (Thomist and neo-Thomists), or symbolic (Paul Tillich) or as mythological and existential (R. Bultmann) or discernment statements of disclosures (Ian Ramsey), and possibly others. Adhering to the guidelines of the Seminar, I shall summarise the views of analytic philosophers, according to whom God-statements are absurd and meaningless. Later on I shall take up analogical, existential and symbolic theories concerning God-statements.

3. *Meaninglessness of God-statements as cognitive statements.*

(i) God means an object of worship or a worshipful object. To worship means to surrender all that one has, without any reserve. This all-out staking surrender is possible if the worshipful object be the highest Reality and that not only just now, as a mere fact, but should be taken as such *necessarily*. Again, a worshipful God is worshipped because He has attributes of omnipotence, omniscience, love, kindness and so on. He should not simply happen to have them, but *must* have them of necessity,



Thus God, being worshipful is a Necessary Being. But 'necessary' applies to those propositions only where terms are used consistently in their stipulated senses. Such propositions do not refer to facts, but only to consistent use of stipulated words in language. Hence, if God is *necessary*, then God becomes only a technical term and not a person who is worshipped. If on the other hand, God be a Being or Person, then He, like all other facts, can be contingent only. From this J. N. Findlay concludes that the concept of God as a Necessary Being becomes self-contradictory and absurd.<sup>1</sup>

(ii) If God be taken to be a fact in some intelligible sense of the term, then God-statements should admit of being verified-falsified. But God is not an object of any experiment, firstly, because God is not a sensible object, and secondly because God is not a tentative hypothesis. God requires an absolute faith in Him, for Lord God cannot be tempted as was done on Mt. Carmel.<sup>2</sup>

(iii) Again, God-statements (in order to be empirical) must be falsifiable (K. Popper). But, according to A. Flew, God-statements are not falsifiable, because terms relating to God are killed by inches through a thousand qualifications.<sup>3</sup>

(iv) Again, statements concerning God's attributes of Love, Omnipotence, Goodness etc., are not conceptually intelligible.<sup>4</sup>

4. *God-statements are analogical.* God is taken to be transcendent. Hence terms which are appropriate for describing ordinary things are not applicable to God. Yet in some sense statements should be able to convey information about God. As creatures somehow reflect their creator; so highly valuable attributes found in the best of creatures may be said to positively describe God. However, the analogy of attribution by virtue of

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1. J. N. Findlay, Can God's existence be disproved. *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, pp. 47-55.

2. A. MacIntyre, *Difficulties in Christian Belief*, p. 62.

3. A. Flew, *Theology and Falsification*, *New Essays in Philosophical Theology*, p. 97.

4. Y. Masih, 'Introduction to Religious Philosophy', Chap. IX and X.

which Love, Wisdom, Goodness etc., are ascribed to God are said to be true of Him in proportion to His essence of perfection. In human being goodness or love is found in their proportion of their essence. As finite creatures are said to fall short of God's infinitude, so words taken from experience of finite things apply to God with a good deal of qualifications. These qualifications serve to purify statements about God in the hope that the negative way will pave the way for greater apprehension of God in due course.

The negative way has been taken up further in the doctrine of demythologising (R. Bultmann) and protestant principle (Paul Tillich). According to Bultmann, religious language is framed for self-understanding in terms of the prevailing religious picture of its age. This understanding of God in terms of profane things, as could be appropriated by science is known as mythological. The Bible, according to Bultmann, describes the world, man and God in terms of the then prevailing mythology. This kind of mythological language concerning God is no longer intelligible to the modern man. Therefore Rudolf Bultmann recommends the method of demythologising the religious language of the Bible for understanding its real message. The term 'de-mythologising' tends to lay emphasis on the negative role of his methodology. However, what he intends is *understanding* of mythological statements concerning God and the world instead of their wholesale denunciation. Bultmann holds that the function of myths is not to give us scientific knowledge of God. Their primary aim is the self-understanding of man in relation to God and the world. For Bultmann God-statements express the existential situation of man in relation to God. For instance, when God is called the creator of the world, then this should not be confused with any scientific statement about the cosmos. The creatorship of God means that man's ultimate ground lies in God's decisions about what goes on in the world and that man can understand himself by his authentic existence as grounded in God's decisions. Similarly, the myth of the day of judgement reminds man that the history of man continually remains dependent on the gracious decision of God and man's realisation of this situation.



Bultmann uses the term 'mythology' in a sense quite different from Eliade and others. He really wants to emphasize the existential character of religious language. Therefore for Bultmann God statements are eschatological expressive of believer's commitment and obedience. Most probably Paul Tillich has carried out the task of New Theology better than Bultmann, so far as religious language is concerned. For Paul Tillich God-statements are largely symbolical. Paul Tillich writes in the tradition of *Analogia Entis*. Both for St. Thomas Aquinas and Paul Tillich God is transcendent. We know that He *is*, but we do not know *what* He is. Paul Tillich expresses this by saying that God is Being. This alone is a non-symbolical statement concerning God, since every other statement about him is symbolical. Bultmann's eschatological statements, like symbolical statements about God are not empirical and they have not to be confused with physical psychological or historical assertions involved in religious language. For instance, statements concerning Jesus of Nazareth are historical, but that He was born of virgin Mary and that He rose from the dead are Christological, eschatological and symbolical statements. For me God-statements are best termed as symbolical statements which have the following inseparable elements involved in them.

1. Existential decision.
2. Pertaining to God as the ultimate ground and concern of man.
3. With a view to establishing man in his being i.e., yielding him Joy, stability and peace of mind.

In mythic language man and the supernatural are integrated and the supernatural appears to be as real as the profane and ordinary, for instance the Vedic God to Vedic seers, or Yahwe for Moses and the Prophets. For the moderner this integration is not possible since for him the supernatural has become incredible and the profane has gained ascendance in his life. Naturally, the supernatural has given way to the ontic. Consequently the supernatural has given way to the ontic reality of Being. *Pari Passu* with the weakening of the credibility of the

supernatural, the doctrine of grace has suffered. Instead man's own reality of freedom, choice and decision has occupied the foreground. This observation is frequently epitomised in Bonhoeffer's phrase 'man come of age.' Therefore, God-statements are better described as symbolical than as mythic. For me a symbol has the following characteristics.

1. A symbol has the ultimate Being as its term of reference.
2. The ultimate Being is not an empty abstraction of Hegel, but is an entity about which man is most deeply concerned in the depth of his being or psyche.
3. The ultimate Being can never be totally exhausted by any term or number of terms, because UT appears much more than, and Beyond the circle of words. Hence, negatively speaking the ultimate Being is unconditioned Transcendent indescribable and beyond any name and form. Yet man cannot help using words to pin UT for himself for gaining vital energy from this ultimate power of Being.
4. Which of the many possible symbols would be most befitting? Those symbols or pictures which help man to have his peace and stability. Such words are termed as symbols and have their locus in the collective UnCs of man, in the sense that they are collectively supported and sustained, and in the sense that unknowingly man is overpowered and gripped by the symbol, welling up from his UCS.

5. By looking at the many symbols, one can say that none of them can satisfy all people, for men differ variously with regard to their psychical function, attitude and mentality (C. G. Jung). From this relativity it can be concluded that symbols are

(i) Transparent like a lens with regard to the ultimate Being i.e. they point to UT. We see through the lens, but do not see the lens itself. In the same way we worship and thereby realise UT through its symbols.

(ii) A symbol is self-negating. Therefore, no symbol can take the place of UT. If any symbol takes the place of UT, then idolatry results.



(iii) A symbol is a representation of UT and at most it remains a representation only. A symbol when adequate to represent UT as the supreme power of Being, energises the worshipper. Hence God-statements are power-thinking and only as such are to be recognised as genuine and authentic.

(iv) When a symbol fails to energise a believer, then it is said to die or wane away. Thus a God-symbol is born and in due course may get obsolete as we find in the case of many Western Gods, for instance, Thor and Zeus.

(v) A symbol at most is relative to the function, attitude and mentality of the worshipper.

God-statements are not true-false, right-wrong, valid-invalid, but are authentic-inauthentic, in other words, have to be evaluated existentially.

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# NATURE AND FUNCTION OF RELIGIOUS STATEMENTS

*By*

R. S. MISRA

Language serves a special function in religion. It tries to give a total picture of man's religious life, his religious beliefs, experiences, ideals, values, feelings, aspirations, activities and so on. But it presents special problems when it attempts to communicate truths about things which are normally supposed to lie beyond man's experience. The scriptures of all the great religions are supposed to embody truths which are supernatural, transcendental and which are *revealed* or *communicated* to man from the Beyond. It is due to this fact that the scriptures are called holy and religious language also as it communicates and expresses truths of the Transcendent, the Divine, the Eternal, the Holy, is endowed with a special sanctity.

But this very special use of language in religion presents some serious problems. I will here refer to three main problems. The first is, granted that there is a Reality which transcends the spatio-temporal order or which constitutes its grounds, can it be described at all? Can we give any positive descriptions of it? Secondly, in case positive descriptions are given of the transcendent Reality, what is their real meaning? For example, when God is described as possessed of knowledge, power, will, love, jealousy, etc. or He is attributed the capacity of seeing, hearing, and speech, do these terms convey the same meaning as they do when they are used in the case of human beings and in describing human relationships. The third problem which, according to me, is more basic and which has assumed a considerable importance in Contemporary Philosophy is, what is the nature and function of religious statements? Do religious statements which are factual



in form refer to any special kind of fact or realm of facts which can be distinguished from empirical or scientific facts? Are there any religious facts as such? Is belief in religious fact or facts legitimate? If such religious statements which have the appearance of factual assertions do not refer to any special religious facts, what is their real significance or function? In the present paper, I propose to confine my discussion to the third problem concerning the nature and function of religious statements. I am here mainly interested in discussing the nature and function of those religious statements which purport to assert facts.

### **Truth and Meaning of Scriptural Statements**

First of all I will try to determine the nature of such religious statements from the point of view of religion itself. Every great religion performs three main functions. (i) It reveals the nature and structure of reality. (ii) It presents the ideals and values of life and the goal of man's life. (iii) It shows the way to attain that goal. Religion reveals a Reality which transcends the world and man and which is held to be the ground or cause of the spatio-temporal world. It also claims that this transcendent Reality cannot be known by man by his sense-experience or his unaided reason. It is possible only by supernatural knowledge. The transcendent Reality has been given different names in different religions. The common feature between all religions is that they believe in supernatural sources of knowledge called revelation and transcendental intuition. The transcendent Reality is given to us only through these higher sources of knowledge. Now it is this belief in revelation or direct intuitive experience of the transcendent Reality that lends weight and authority to religious statements. The statements of the scriptures of the different religions which describe the nature and structure of the transcendent Reality are held to be infallible in different religious traditions. The theologians and philosophers of these traditions do not question the truth of the scriptural statements. What they try to ascertain is their meaning. They differ in the interpretations of such statements though they are in full agreement so far as the question of their truth is concerned. So it is the problem of meaning that engages the minds of theologians and religious

philosophers of different traditions and not that of truth. The truth of the scriptural statements is supposed to be self-evident. The question of truth of such statements does not arise from within that religion. It is raised by some outside source, religious or non-religious.

The problem of meaning assumes a considerable importance in Theology and religious philosophy on account of the ambiguous character of religious statements. There are statements which appear to assert facts but when closely examined, they are found to have no literal significance. For example, Śaṅkara contends that the statements of Śrutis which assert the transformation of Brahman into the world are not literally significant. The statements that affirm the identity of Ātman and *Brahman* lead to the liberation of man; but the statement that *Brahman* is transformed into the world does not result in the attainment of any independent fruit. There is no proof in this respect. So such a statement cannot be said to have any literal meaning. But it is nevertheless significant. Its significance lies in the fact that it puts man on the way to Brahman.<sup>1</sup> Such statements serve as pointers to the transcendent Reality; they do not describe it. Thus there are statements of Śrutis such as : "This Ātman is Brahman", "I am Brahman", etc. which according to Śaṅkara have literal significance as they directly refer to and describe facts of a special order. There are other statements which are significant only in the sense that they serve a specific function. I will call them functional statements. We may divide religious statements which purport to assert facts into two kinds : Factual statements and Functional statements. Factual statements are literally significant and directly refer to Reality, whereas functional statements have a second order meaning and serve only as pointers to it, or serve some other purpose in man's religious life. Both kinds of statements are held as true in religion and theology. They present a problem only with regard to their meaning. When a theologian or a religious philosopher is confronted with the scriptural statements which seem to contradict each other, he does not try to determine which one is true and which is not true.

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1. *Brahma Sūtra* Ś. B. 2. 1. 14.



He simply tries to determine their meaning. The truth of the religious statements is presupposed by him. He proceeds on the assumption that the contradiction which exists between two scriptural statements is merely apparent and not real. It exists due to the ambiguity in their meaning. So he tries to reconcile the two apparently contradictory statements by clarifying their real meaning. In religious philosophy and theology, the Law of Contradiction is applied to determine only the meaning of religious (scriptural) statements and not their truth. The truth of the scriptural statements is never questioned by theologians and religious philosophers who belong to the "religious circle." It constitutes the presupposition of religious philosophy and theology. The question of truth or falsity arises in regard to the interpretation of scriptural statements. It is the meaning that is ascribed to a scriptural statement that may be conceived as true or false. Thus the statements made by a theologian or religious philosopher may be true or false. But the question whether the scriptural statements themselves are true or false does not arise from within the religion or religious tradition to which the scripture belongs.

The question concerning the truth or falsity of scriptural statements arises in religion only when one religion is confronted by its opposite. Different religions give different and sometimes contradictory descriptions of the nature and structure of the transcendent reality or realities. For example, the two statements: "The self is created by God" and "The self is uncreated" cannot both be true. Only one of them can be true though both may happen to be false. Thus the truth of scriptural assertions cannot be taken for granted. Their infallibility cannot be accepted as all the religions lay the same claim for their descriptions of the ultimate reality. The two statements which clearly contradict each other cannot be said to be equally true or infallible. So if the religious statements which make factual assertions are viewed from the point of view of Comparative Religion, it has to be said that they differ from each other not only in their meaning but also in respect of truth. Some religious assertions may be true, some may not be true.

The different and even contradictory descriptions of the transcendent Reality made by different religions raise a most

difficult problem for students of Philosophy of Religion. The question is, do such religious assertions refer to any reality or fact? Do they possess any objective content? Can they be taken as factual assertions? On this fundamental issue we find wide divergence between the views of religious and non-religious philosophers.

So far as the Theologians and religious philosophers belonging to particular religious traditions are concerned they generally consider the religious statements which describe the nature and character of the transcendent Reality etc. as factual in character. Their contention is that there is an order or level of existence which transcends man's sense-experience and reason and it is directly experienced by mystics, yogis and other spiritually developed persons. As Radhakrishnan put it, "To say that God exists means that spiritual experience is attainable. The possibility of the experience constitutes the most conclusive proof of the reality of God. God is 'given', and is the factual content of the spiritual experience. All other proofs are descriptions of God, matter of definition, and language."<sup>1</sup> Spiritual experience of God according to the religious view is not the experience of one's own mental idea or emotions etc. It is the experience of something which is not contained in that experience. It is cognitive in character and has a factual content which is God himself.

### **Religious Experience and Religious Knowledge : An Examination of A. J. Ayer's View**

A. J. Ayer questions this view of spiritual or religious experience concerning God and other transcendent entities. According to him, "the argument from religious experience is altogether fallacious. The fact that people have religious experiences is interesting from the psychological point of view but it does not in any way imply that there is such a thing as religious knowledge, any more than our having moral experiences implies that there is such a thing as moral knowledge. The theist, like the moralist, may believe that his experiences are

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1. *Eastern Religions and Western Thought*, Second Edition 1940, Oxford University Press, p. 27.



cognitive experiences, but, unless he can formulate his 'knowledge' in propositions that are empirically verifiable, we may be sure that he is deceiving himself. It follows that those philosophers who fill their books with assertions that they intuitively "Know" this or that moral or religious "truth" are merely providing material for the psycho-analyst. For no act of intuition can be said to reveal a truth about any matter of fact unless it issues in verifiable propositions. And all such propositions are to be incorporated in the system of empirical propositions which constitutes science."<sup>1</sup> He denies the possibility of religious knowledge mainly on the ground, which constitutes the well known dogma of the Logical Positivists that it cannot be expressed in propositions which are empirically verifiable. No statement which purports to express the nature of God can be said to possess literal significance as it is not verifiable. Any statement about God and other transcendental entities cannot be taken as factual in character. So religious experience of God according to this view cannot be elevated to the status of religious knowledge and cannot provide any proof for his existence.

I am not interested here in giving any detailed account of the self-contradictions and shortcomings that are inherent in this view as it has already been subjected to a good deal of criticism by eminent thinkers. I will simply point out that the empiricists, including the Logical positivists, feel constrained to explain certain facts on the basis of certain postulates which are not based on experience or derived from it. The very basic thesis of the Logical Positivists that no factual statement is literally significant unless it can be verified in sense experience is itself unverifiable. It is a universal proposition which cannot be verified by sense experience. Historical knowledge cannot be based simply on the evidence of sense experience. Statements about the past or future cannot, strictly speaking, be verified by observation. Our sense experience is confined to the present and cannot extend into the past or future. Universal propositions cannot be based simply on

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1. *Language, Truth and Logic*, Sixteenth Impression of the second edition, October 1964, London Victor Gallancy Ltd., pp. 19-20.

perception. As Bertrand Russell puts it, "Universal propositions based on perception alone apply only to a definite period of time, during which there has been continuous observation. They cannot tell us anything about what happens at other times. In particular, they can tell us nothing about the future. The whole *practical* utility of knowledge depends on its power of foretelling the future, and if this is to be possible we must have universal knowledge not of the above sort." This universal knowledge is possible only if it is based on principles and postulates which are not derived from sense experience. Our knowledge of other minds is also not possible if we remain confined to sense experience. There are significant statements which are not subject to verification even in principle. For example, the statement, 'If there is a war between super powers, human race will become extinct' is not verifiable even in principle. These and other facts clearly show the inadequacies in the empiricist theory of knowledge. All human knowledge pertaining to facts cannot be reduced to sense experience. So the contention of the Logical Positivists that there cannot be any transcendent truths of religion, for the sentences which are supposed to express such truths are not literally significant cannot be accepted. A statement may possess literal significance, though it may not be empirically verifiable.

So we cannot reject the testimony of religious experience simply on the ground that the statements which communicate it are not empirically verifiable. Their empirical verification is not possible not because they necessarily lack factual content, but because they refer to a realm of reality which in its very nature transcends sense experience and reason. The spiritual experiences of seers, yogis, mystics etc. bear clear witness to the reality of the transcendent. They have direct access to these higher ranges of consciousness and being which cannot be comprehended by man's empirical consciousness. These spiritual men come in possession of a consciousness which is superior to sense experience and reason. They experience the transcendent reality or realities and not simply the ideas and emotions that arise in their own minds. The sentences which they use to express and formulate their experiences are factual in character. The class of factual state-



ments is thus wider than the class of empirically verifiable statements.

### **Verification of Religious Statements :**

I do not think it logically justified to deny altogether the possibility of verification in respect of religious statements which refer to facts. To say that a religious statement is factual but it is not verifiable in any sense is to commit self-contradiction. The possibility of its verification by the spiritual consciousness of man cannot be denied. One may believe in the existence of God or of a timeless reality on the testimony of others. But it is open to one to experience God directly by attaining the higher spiritual consciousness. His own realisation will be a conclusive proof of God's existence. Even if the actual verification of some factual religious statements is not possible to man in the present state of his existence, at least the theoretical possibility of their verification cannot be ruled out. It lies within the range of possibility that some day man may rise above the present state of his existence and come in possession of a consciousness which may reveal to him the depth of reality, the eternal and infinite being. As man's knowledge of the objective world goes on expanding, so his consciousness may also enlarge. In the present state of human existence, only a few individuals are able to rise to that spiritual level, but a day may come when in the course of cosmic evolution, the human species may rise to a state of consciousness and existence in a permanent way, which is far superior to and qualitatively different from the mental or empirical consciousness. Some great modern thinkers have already envisaged the possibility of the emergence of such a higher or supramental consciousness. The emergence of mind cannot necessarily be conceived as marking the apex of man's evolution or as constituting the end of the evolutionary process.

Indian religious and philosophical traditions fully and firmly believe in man's spiritual possibilities. The discipline of yoga to realise the spiritual possibilities to the fullest extent has been developed here almost to perfection. According to the Indian spiritual tradition the waking consciousness of man remains contracted due to his being in the powerful grip of

emotions and passions, his irresistible attachment to objects of sense and his wrong understanding of his existential situation. This situation of man is characterised as the state of bondage. This is symbolized by the terms *avidyā*, *trṣṇā*, *ahamkāra*, *moha*, *kāma* etc. Man is endowed with the capacity to change not only his psychological structure but his epistemological and ontological structures as well by means of yoga.

This great yogic tradition, which has been sustained, developed and nourished by the toil and sacrifice of innumerable people, including some of the finest products of the human race, cannot simply be brushed aside on the ground that it does not submit itself to the dictates of man's empirical consciousness or his waking experience. One cannot legitimately ask the question, if God is there, why I cannot see him? We can not see Him as we see objects. Experience of God is possible for one directly and immediately whose ego-dominated mind is silenced and in whom spiritual illumination, *jñāna* or *bodhi* takes place. In that stage man enjoys his union with the divine. He does not see God from a distance but becomes one with Him. This constitutes the supreme possibility of religious knowledge in the present state of human existence. Religious knowledge attains its fulfilment when man breaks through the limitations of his finitude and attains unity with the Divine. In this state his knowledge of God no more remains merely theoretical and abstract but becomes a living knowledge. God also ceases to be merely an abstract philosophical concept but becomes a living God. This constitutes the supreme ideal of religious knowledge. It is a living knowledge or realisation of God or of the supersensible reality.

### **Religious knowledge and Empirical knowledge :**

This living knowledge of the divine is called *parā vidyā* in the Upaniṣads. It bridges the gulf between the knower and the known. One who knows Brahman, say the Upaniṣads, becomes Brahman. This unity between the knower and the known is not possible in the case of the knowledge of empirical facts. There the distance between the knower and the known remains intact. In this respect religious knowledge differs essentially from empirical knowledge. It is only man's cognitive structure that



is involves in empirical knowledge. But religious knowledge involves the whole psychic structure of man and his being as a whole. The ideal of empirical or scientific knowledge is the attainment of objectivity. It is essentially the knowledge of the object as it is apart from its relation to the subject. But the ideal of religious knowledge is the attainment of unity between the knower and the known, between man and the Divine. A religious man aspires for union or communion with the Divine. This truth has been emphasized by all the religions. In this respect religious knowledge is qualitatively different from the scientific or empirical knowledge, though it is not essentially opposed to the latter. It is not permissible to confuse the one with the other. One has to appreciate this difference between the two kinds of knowledge in order to understand the true character of religious language. Religious knowledge has been formulated in propositions by the philosophers of different religious traditions. These propositions have been conceived as factual in character. But they do not refer to any empirical facts; they have no spatio-temporal reference. They have reference to a dimension of reality, as has been stated above, which is revealed to the higher consciousness, the spiritual consciousness of man. The truth of the higher consciousness or supramental or spiritual consciousness has been admitted by all the great religions and religious traditions and has been directly realised by the mystics, seers and yogis of all the ages. The meaning or truth of religious propositions can be apprehended only with reference to this higher consciousness of man which is not conditioned by finitude. The empirical consciousness of man which is conditioned by finitude can have no access to the realms of being which transcend spatio-temporal limitations. So it is not legitimate to apply empirical criterion to judge the truth of the propositions which refer to trans-empirical and supra-sensible reality. A proposition may be factual and cognitive and yet it may not be empirically verifiable as it does not refer to any empirical facts. So cognitive propositions cannot be treated as coterminous with empirically verifiable propositions as Ayer and others would have us believe.

#### **Polarity in Religious Statements :**

It is true that all religious statements are not cognitive.

There are also statements which appear to be cognitive but are not really so. But there is a class of religious statements which can be characterised as cognitive as they refer to reality or realities which can be experienced by one who has attained a higher consciousness. It is not easy for a philosopher of religion to determine which religious statements are cognitive and which are not. There is no unanimity in this respect among different religious philosophers. A statement which is taken as literally true by one school of religious philosophers may be conceived as merely symbolic by another. Unlike an empirical or scientific statement, a religious statement is not purely objective in character. It involves inevitably an element of subjectivity in it. A mystic or a yogi speaks about the supersensible reality as he has experienced it. But this speaking about reality involves a definite element of interpretation in it. Every super-sensible experience is subjected to this interpretation in the process of its communication. It is evident from the fact that every mystic or yogi communicates his supernatural or spiritual experiences through words and symbols which he has received from his tradition. This fact introduces an element of subjectivity in all religious statements. They do not simply express the nature of reality as it has been experienced by the seer but as he interprets it in terms of his language, tradition, historical situation and so on. Thus every factual religious statement involves a polarity of objective and subjective elements. It is neither purely objective nor purely subjective in character. This truth of religious assertions is not grasped and appreciated by those who conceive them as merely subjective in nature, as merely projections of human feelings, desires or attitudes.

One has to understand and appreciate the distinct character of religious assertions which have reference to trans-empirical reality or realities like Brahman, Īsvara, Ātman, Mokṣa etc. A religious statement of this nature has to be clearly distinguished from an empirical or scientific statement and also from an ethical or aesthetic statement. Any confusion in this respect leads to an arbitrary and false interpretation of religion and of religious statements as one finds in the studies and discussions made by some recent and contemporary philosophers.



An appreciation of the distinct character of religion and of religious statements constrains one to pay serious attention to the religious belief in the supersensible and transcendent realities, namely, God, soul immortality, liberation and so on. Every religion is in one way or the other centred in these realities. It admits a dimension of reality which is different from and superior to the spatio-temporal world. It constitutes the central feature of each religion and is a fact which cannot legitimately be ignored or explained away. Any attempt to do it does not do justice to religion. It can at the most succeed in presenting a superficial and surface view of religion and will lose sight of its depth. It will mean looking at religion from a distance and not from within. It is not sufficient to show in what way or ways religion is useful to the individual and the society. It is of utmost importance to show what are the truths that it embodies. For it is the deeper truths of religion that have fascinated man from the dawn of history and have made him a restless seeker of Life, Light and Immortality.

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# RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

By

KRUSHNA PRASAD MISHRA

[ 1 ]

Language has been there to serve the purposes of human beings—to satisfy their wishes and desires, to express their dreams, ambitions and ideals, to communicate their thoughts to others, to describe things which surround them, to issue commands—in short to perform a myriad of functions. The nature of the multiplicity of functions of language has been beautifully put forth by Wittgenstein in his *Philosophical Investigations*, Section 23.

Review the multiplicity of language-games in the following examples and in others :

Giving orders, and obeying them—

Describing the appearance of an object, or giving its measurements —

Constructing an object from a description (a drawing) —

Reporting an event —

Speculating an event —

Forming and testing a hypothesis —

Presenting the results of an experiment in tables and diagrams —

Making up a story; and reading it —

Play — acting —

Singing catches —

Guessing riddles —

Making a joke; telling it —

Solving a problem in practical arithmetic —

Translating from one language into another —

Asking, thanking, cursing, greeting, praying —



It is interesting to compare the multiplicity of the tools in language and of the ways they are used, the multiplicity of kinds of word and sentence, with what logicians have said about the structure of language. (Including the author of the *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*).<sup>1</sup>

Of these countless types of language-game, no one need be taken to be more or less important than the other. Wittgenstein took one type of game to be more important than others in his *Tractatus*, which gave rise to philosophical difficulties which he tried to solve in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Philosophers are supposed not to construct any ideal language or reduce others to any one type but to find out the meaning of words and sentences of different discourses. To understand a word or a sentence you must see it at home or at work—that is playing its part in its appropriate language game or form of life. Theological problems, e.g. 'Whether God exists?' have arisen because of the tendency on the part of some philosophers to reduce the religious language to other sorts of language. This is the long shadow of the *Tractatus* upon them.<sup>2</sup>

Wittgenstein refers to theology as follows in the *Philosophical Investigations*. Section 373: "Grammar tells us what kind of object anything is (Theology as grammar)." Taking this remark along with what he has said before, one can say that as grammar is to language, so theology is to religion—it tells us what it does or does not make sense to say in any religion. Religion is a form of life.

I propose to study the nature of religious language and delineate the logical geography of some of the key concepts used in it. I would also show how some of the traditional problems could be solved by taking recourse to this sort of analysis.

## [ 2 ]

Religious language describes the nature of God. His relationship with the world, human beings, etc. We also make a

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1. Basil Blackwell, Oxford, 1967.

2. See W. D. Hudson's book *Ludwig Wittgenstein—The Bearing of his Philosophy upon Religious Belief*, London, Lutterworth Press, 1968.

distinction between sacred and profane objects, perform ritual acts, talk about and practice a moral code believed to be sanctioned by the gods, try to express our feelings of awe, sense of mystery, sense of guilt and adoration, pray and try to communicate with the gods, hold a world-view and organize our lives and group activities through such a language.

It would be very interesting to find out what one should do or what one should not do to be said that one is playing the religious game. In this way one may find out the characteristics basic to religion—rules fundamental to the religious game. Suppose one criticizes the practices of a particular religion. He may be branded as irreligious by the believers of that religion, but thereby the man would not be really irreligious. He might have his own views regarding God, soul and society. Of course we say a man to be religious who obeys the rules of his religion. Let me call it the Stage I of one's religious life. But to avoid these rules is not to become irreligious as he might be just avoiding religiosity not religion. Hence a gradation in the class of religious persons has to be made. It is also made so in ordinary practice. One may break any rule of the religion to which he belongs but he would still be taken to be religious if he had experience of God or awareness of God or communion with Him. This experience is admitted to be of primary importance in every religion, not the mere practice of its rules.

Religious differences have come not because of this religious experience but because of the interpretations put upon it by the persons who had this experience. A religious man in this second sense may make any of the following possible claims about his experience of God : (1) Only he has experienced God. (2) Others might have experienced, though their formulation is wrong or inadequate. (3) They have formulated their experiences according to their light and capacity. (4) No formulation is possible.

The first is only a logical possibility. Usually a person having this experience admits others belonging to his religious community to have similar experiences. In this way tests are agreed upon which establish genuine experience of God and distinguish it decisively from the ungentine. The first and the



second points of view are usually associated with Judaism and Christianity. Third and the fourth are to be found among the Indian religious thinkers. According to them religious experience is unique and incommunicable. But people have talked about it and thus different religions have been originated.

Now what happens to the religious person who gets this experience? He takes religion to be more important than others, other games appear as "vanity of the vanities." He may still play other games, participate in their discourses, but his God-realization brings forth a change in his conceptual frame-work, a rearrangement in all the frame-works. After this, only God is taken to be existing, other things depending on Him for their existence. In theology this aspect of the religious life, let me call it Stage II, has been pointed out by saying that God is necessarily existent other things are contingently existent.

Many recent day analysts have forgotten the basic demand of religion at this Stage II.<sup>1</sup> W. D. Hudson may be taken as an example. The point is, the rules of the religious game are such that at this stage all the other games appear differently. A complete revision in the outlook takes place. Gita suggests this as follows: "What is night to all beings, therein the self-controlled one is awake. Where all beings are awake, that is the night of the sage who sees." (Gita, Chapter 2, Verse 69).<sup>2</sup> This experience forces a change in the normal frame-work also. To quote the Gita again. "He who is free from egotistic notion, whose mind is not tainted, though he kills these creatures, he kills not, he is not bound." (Chapter 18, Verse 17).<sup>3</sup> Analysts like Hudson have remained with the Stage of the religious life. Religious conceptual frame-work is not secluded and autonomous like other schemes. It encompasses other conceptual schemes. Hence God realization brings about fundamental changes in other frame-works also. It is

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1. See W. D. Hudson's book *Ludwig Wittgenstein—The Bearing of his Philosophy upon Religious Belief*, London, Lutterworth Press, 1968.

2. Sri Shankaracharya, tr. by A Mahadeva Shastri, Madras, V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons, 292 Esplanade, 1947.

3. *Ibid.*

right that every conceptual scheme has its constitutive concepts : science, that of physical object; morality, that of obligation, etc. But as religion is all inclusive at its Stage II, it affects the other schemes also. Hence within the religion, questions like, 'Do physical objects really exist ?' 'Does obligation really exist ?' etc. could be asked and answered. The logicians have pointed out at this feature by saying that the reality interest in religion is paramount. One may think that this interpretation goes against the section we quoted in the beginning of this paper. But the important point in Wittgenstein's philosophy is his view of meaning. Religion is so played at Stage II that the multiplicity with which one starts does not remain. Section 654 supports this sort of approach : "Our mistake is to look for an explanation where we ought to look at what happens as a "Proto-phenomenon." That is where we ought to have said : this language game is played.<sup>1</sup>

Thus we can find out the meaning of the phrase 'really exist' in an ontologically ultimate sense in the religious conceptual scheme. We can discover outside other schemes which of their constitutive concepts really exist and which do not. This is done in every religion and this is how the game is played. Every religious man is supposed to do this in his life time. It is emphasised by the Indian religions that one would be in the cycle of births and deaths until he revises his conceptual scheme through getting God-realization.

But then how does one know that one has such an experience ? How to test it ? A person who has this experience does not doubt it as it carries its own guarantee. Others can know that he has got it by noticing the way in which he lives, behaves and talks. But there may be imitators here. Hence bodily conditions have also been given; "When at every gate in this body there shoots up wisdom-light, then it may be known that Sattva is predominant" (Gita, Chapter 14, Verse 11).<sup>2</sup> Also it is supposed that he could perform miracles if he would so want.<sup>3</sup>

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1. Sri Shankaracharya, trans. by A. Mahadeva Shastri, Madras, V. Ramaswamy Sastrulu and Sons, 292 Esplanade, 1947.

2. *Ibid.*

3. Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra.



But it should be noticed here in the above passage and in other places, the peculiar use of the common words like light. How would light stream forth from every gate of the body of a realized man? Or even when it is said that God is "the Goal, the Sustainer, the Lord, the Witness, the Abode, the Shelter and the Friend, the Origin, Dissolution and Stay, the Treasurehouse, the Seed imperishable," (Gita, Chapter 9, Verse 18)<sup>1</sup> what is meant by the words 'goal', sustainer', etc.? It is clear that the uses of these words are derived from their application to human beings and other observable entities but at the same time these uses in religion are markedly different from their application to human beings.

[ 3 ]

One gets disturbed thus when one compares the use of words in other discourses with that of the uses in religious discourse. For example, ordinarily 'love' is used when particular semantic conditions are available. But in case of God, we use this word as in 'God loves us as a father loves his children' even when the conditions are not available. One finds a child dying of cancer. His father is driven to madness in his efforts to help. But his Heavenly Father reveals no obvious signs of concern. But none the less religious people would say that He loves us. This is true in case of all the words (Goal, Sustainer, Lord, Witness, Abode, Shelter, etc.) that are used regarding God. Of course this is how the game is played. One must not contrast these uses with their ordinary uses and think one to be genuine and others as spurious. However, in religious Stage I the oddity of using these words appear most as in this stage all the games are taken to be equally justifiable and important. But as one advances to the Stage II the uses in the religious discourse looks normal—all right, whereas other uses appear as peripheral and derived.

But even then one has to account for the use of the words in religious discourse in Stage I. The semantic rules are so obviously broken that it can be said that the words are not used

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1. Patañjali's Yoga Sūtra.

assertively. For example, if God does not have a body, how could he create, sustain or destroy any thing? Hence creating, sustaining and destroying cannot be the same thing for God as for man. Besides the assertive uses one finds evaluative uses of the words in ordinary language. All the words that are used as predicates in the utterances regarding God have evaluative meaning besides the descriptive ones. Here, as in morality, the evaluative meaning is primary, descriptive meaning secondary. The evaluative meaning of these words are used to shift the descriptive meaning of God by saints, seers and the Prophets from time to time. The oddity which has been pointed out before is regarding the descriptive criteria of these words. However by taking help of their evaluative meaning they are used so create a feeling for accepting religion as a justifiable form of activity, to accept it as all important and to evoke religious feelings like the sense of mystery, away (10th and 11th chapters of the Gita), pervasive sense of helplessness (1st chapter), sense of peace and security (3rd Chapter, 22nd, 23rd verse), at homeness in the world (4th Chapter, 1 to 4th verse), etc. A pro-attitude for a particular kind of picture, *blik*<sup>1</sup> is thus gradually created. To instill a particular kind of picture, symbols and myths are also frequently introduced.

Is there any alternative to the religious game? What happens if one does not play the game? Mostly people may not be very vocal about it but none the less they play this game. Even to be a humanist is to play this game. Not to play this game at all amounts to playing another game which has been eloquently hinted at in the Gita in the Sixteenth Chapter in discussing the

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1. Antony Flew and Alasdair MacIntyre, edited *New Essays In Philosophical Theology*, SCM Press Ltd., London, 1963, pp. 99-103. Let me quote a sentence from the article printed in these pages, by R. M. Hare: "It was Hume who taught us that our whole connerce with the world depends upon our *blik* about the world; and that differences between *bliks* about the world cannot be settled by observation of what happens in the world," See page 101.



materialists' view of the world. Perhaps there is no possibility of any rational communication between these two views or *bliks*. Only one has to live one's life according to his *blik* and find out the consequences. The proof of the pudding is in the eating.



# RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE

By

R. N. MUKERJI

## I

In this article we try to show that there is no need of a special religious language, that the ordinary language with certain extensions of meanings can very well serve the purpose of religions. In this connection we also show that the meaninglessness of the type attributed to certain religious statements also apply to similar secular evaluative statements, and non-verifiability applies also to similar non-exclusive (*anupasamhāri*) scientific statements. We also show that some religious statements can also meet the stringent requirement of verification for meaning. From these we conclude that verifiability or non-verifiability cannot provide the criterion for religious language.

(1) *Difficulties of Religious and other Meanings and the Factor of Evaluation* : The religious statement that 'God is kind like a father'; is generally held up as the stock example to prove the meaninglessness of religious statements, in some important sense. For instance. Anthony Flew has pointed out that no aspect of experience can either falsify or prove it true. If a man's son is afflicted with cancer, he is driven frantic in trying to cure him, but God shows no such concern. But that does not shake the faith of the faithful in God's fatherly kindness.<sup>1</sup>

Attribution of kindness whether to God or to man is an evaluative statement, and no such statement can be tested in test-tube, and all of them have margins for differences of estimation and opinion. For instance, an irrigation officer cannot irrigate

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1. Kaufmann, *Theology and Falsification from Tolstoy to Camus* (1964), p. 470 f.



all the fields together. By the owner of the first field he irrigates, he might be called kind, nothing by the owner of the second field, but unkind by that of the third field. So a doctor might be called kind by the patient he cures, quack and only after money by a patient he fails to cure, and unkind by the relatives of a patient who dies under his treatment.

One might be tempted to think that such limitations as apply to irrigation officers or doctors do not apply to God. But actually they do apply, because if God were to allow everything everywhere it would lead to complete absurdity. In the case cited above what should God do to establish his bonafides? Flew's problem partly arises from a basic assumption that God sits on a throne in the sky. But this is not a very reasonable or respectable conception of God. If, instead, we take the view of *Īśopaniṣad* that God pervades every things, then just as God smites as cancer, he also tries to cure it as the frantic father, doctor, etc. In the first curative role, God is already officiating as a kind father. Should He play a duplicate earthly father, and interfere with the one already there, and with as little chance of success? Such duplication would be quite pointless, for the original statement was 'God is kind like a father', not 'God is kind like two fathers.' Or should God interfere in his all-mighty capacity. In the latter case why should he not similarly interfere in cases of threatened death of man and all other creatures, including typhoid and plague germs? But that would turn the world into a mad-house, with the prospect of starvation for all.

Therefore, God can only be kind to men in some ways. Now no one who has not received some kindness can complain of unkindness, because only men and some kinds of birds can speak, and both require prolonged parental care and kindness for survival. In this and other ways, whatever kindness a man has received during his life-time, might be regarded by him with gratitude, and then he might say that God or the totality of things are (have been) kind. But another man might by temperament be of a demanding type, who does not count his blessing but takes good things of life for granted, and only grumbles for what he has not got. Such a man might be getting good things of life far

beyond his merits, and yet he may complain that God is unkind. Thus, such judgements are evaluative. Moreover, such judgements about God are *anupasamhāri* or non-exclusive, because God is regarded as the originator and responsible for every thing. Therefore, the man who tells that God is kind, has already taken into account the facts of death and diseases. Therefore, they do not present any new set of objects that can test and verify the given statement one way or the other. Here, given all the facts, it is a question of evaluation, and a question of temperament, whether the speaker is grateful or demanding.

### Choice Based on Probabilities

The above point of difference in estimation can be made clear with reference to the question of God's existence. Ultimately the grounds for belief in God's existence boil down to two questions and corresponding quests. Can all the design in the universe be without conscious direction, and can consciousness emerge from unconscious nature? Here, again, the evidence is much the same, but estimations differ. Any estimation here is based upon probabilities. But such estimations are nothing unusual, our whole life is based on them. Whenever we decide on any course of action, the future outcome is always a matter of probability. A man tries to bring up his children in the hope that they will be good, and will survive himself. But these are only probable conjectures. If one chooses to specialize in Philosophy rather than Physics, hoping that it will be to his best interest, that is also a calculation based on probabilities. In the above religious case, also, the choice that one makes becomes important only if he makes it a ground for future action. Whether a man is theist or an atheist makes little difference, unless as a theist he really intends to look for the artist behind the world-art, and to plumb the ocean of consciousness underlying his single spark. In spite of uncertainties, just as it is best to try to bring up one's children to the best of capacity, it is perhaps best to choose theism rather than atheism. It at least keeps open life's greatest challenge and adventure of exploring the meaning and foundation of life. But with atheism, there remains nothing but to accept death and defeat.



As we shall see in the sequel, the problem of estimation of probabilities associated with *anupasanāhārī* situations, lies at the foundation of sciences also. But such estimation of probabilities is not confined only to such cases, rather it is involved in all cases of verification. Thus seeing foot-prints of a tiger in the mud, one may take it to verify that an elephant has been around, and if he sees an elephant, he can take it to verify that an elephant is there. But a man like the much-maligned Cārvāka could use the trick of making pug marks with a tiger-claw to befool the logicians. Similarly, suppose a man, who has never before been to a cinema, sits in the front row for a good view in a Gemini picture complete with all the paraphernalia of a circus, and an elephant approaches to the front. Then, most probably, the man will leave his seat and draw back in apprehension. These examples should make it clear that whether Y is called upon to verify X, or X itself is called upon to verify itself, in both cases an estimation of probabilities is involved, as it is involved in determining whether an apparent serpent verifies an actual serpent or a rope, or an apparent piece of silver verifies actual silver or shell. Again, a verification is never certain, as it involves the logical fallacy of affirming the consequent.

## (2) An Examination of the Meaning of a Certain Type of Upaniṣadic Mantras :

Next we shall examine a certain type of Upaniṣadic statements to show that (a) inspite of apparent contradiction and inconsistency, their meanings involve no such marked departure from common sense as to require a specific religious language and (b) their meanings can be as neatly and satisfactorily be verified as any statement whatever. Let us take *Īśopaniṣad*, 5,

तदेजति तन्नैजति तददूरे तदन्तिके ।

तदन्तरस्य सर्वस्य तदु सर्वस्यास्य बाह्यतः ॥

*"It moves yet moves not, it is far and also near, it pervades inside every thing, and also every where outside."*

Clearly here far and near, inside and outside are taken as dichotomies like movement and stability. So it is not meant like space which is both near and far, inside and outside in different

parts. Brahman, which is partless, is at once far and near, inside and outside. In explanation of the meaning of the above *mantra*, Śaṅkara tells us that it moves, that is, even while itself immobile, it appears to move. It is far off because unattainable by the non-discriminating even in hundreds or billions of years, but also near because it is the very soul of the wise. It is also inside because of the last reason and also outside everywhere in all pervasive space. In the earlier verse Śaṅkara has explained that Brahman as *nirupādhika* is immutable, but as *sopādhika* is swifter than the mind being everywhere even before any one can reach there.

For understanding the meaning of this *mantra*, three factors have to be kept clearly in mind.

(1) As already explained 'moving and non moving', 'near and far', 'inside and outside' cannot refer to different things or different parts of things, for in that case the *mantra* would be no more than a pompous truism. Actually it means that 'what is moving is also non-moving', 'what is far is also near', and 'what is outside is also inside.'

(2) Rest is as much a physical phenomenon as motion, and as such it would be more consistent to apply both rest and motion to *sopādhika* Brahman, instead of applying rest to *nirupādhika* Brahman and motion to the *sopādhika*. In the latter case similar division would be expected in the cases of 'near and far', and 'inside and outside.' *Nirupādhika* Brahman would perhaps be better stated by *neti neti*, viz., 'neither moving nor non-moving', 'neither far nor near', 'neither inside nor outside.' That would show that *sopādhika* and *nirupādhika* Brahman are two ways of regarding the absolute reality. But it might be granted that motionlessness, nearness and inside are closer to the *nirupādhika* aspect, and motion, distance and outside closer to the *sopādhika* aspect.

(3) Absolute is not a thing among other things, but is the absolute precondition of all things. Hence, whatever is an absolute pre-condition of all things, can be regarded as an universal characteristic of *sopādhika* Brahman. In the *mantra* it has been said that it moves and does not move. This follows from relativity



of motion and rest both psychologically and physically, as a result of which nothing can be designated as either at rest or in motion in an absolute sense.

### Psychological Inter-dependence of Rest and Motion

Change is the basis of perception. Hence rest and motion are perceptible only in contrast with each other. Mind is not only changeful as repeatedly mentioned in our texts, but it seeks both motion in rest and rest in motion, to get its bearing. This can be experimentally shown in various ways, specially with phi-phenomenon and reversible ground and figure diagram.

In the apparatus for phi-phenomenon, there are two rods  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$  set at an angle that can be varied, and alternately lighted and darkened. This gives the impression of the same rod swinging round. Whether we begin initially from the vertical position close to CD or horizontal position close to AB, as we vary the angle of rods  $R_1$ ,  $R_2$ , the swings continue along the same axis well beyond the angles of 45° when theoretically the axis ought to get changed. This shows that the mind not only resolves two sets of changes of lighting into single changes of the direction of rod, but also resists, abrupt change of direction of swings.

In the case of alternating 'ground figure' design, as shown the alternate swings between the ground and figure are changes introduced by the mind in what is stationary changeless pattern.<sup>1</sup> Many other similar instances can be easily adduced. In any continuous sound, rhythmic intervals can be read by the mind, these intervals constituting patterns of stability within change. Motions are also introduced in swing of attention in case of just perceptible stimuli, like a just perceptible dot on a white surface, or the just perceptible ticking of a clock.

In figures like water-fall and spirals, inspite of static designs, a strong perception of movement occurs, since the designs are so made as to correspond to retinal images in

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1. L. Postman and J. P. Egan, *Experimental Psychology* (Harper, 1964), p. 209. E. R. Hilgard, *Introduction to Psychology* (Harcourt, 1957), Ch. 15 and illustrations 196, 212.

perception of actual motion. The perception of actual motion also depends on staccato experiences, a fact used in movie prejections in which a series of still pictures, changed sufficiently quickly, gives the impression of continuous motion. If instead the impressions change continuously, instead of motion a continuous curve is perceived as in the case of quickly moved fire-brand or *alātacakra*. This fact shows clearly that movement is perceived only against a background of rest.

While in a railway coach, we always estimate movement wrongly on the basis of mere percepts. When our coach is standing but the train on the next track begins to move, we always perceive that our coach is moving in the opposite direction. When our coach actually begins to move, in is the environment that is perceived as if moving in the opposite direction.

All these show the psychophysical relativity of rest and motion in perception. When we investigate the phenomena of rest and motion in terms of their logical and physical nature the results are similar.

### Physical Inter-dependence of Rest and Motion

In *Vakyapadiya* there is this argument against possibility of motion. An object cannot move in the path already crossed, nor can it move in the path not crossed. Hence it cannot move at all. A similar argument also occurs in *Madhyamaka Śāstra*.<sup>1</sup> Zeno had a similar argument that an arrow cannot move where it is nor where it is not. Hence it cannot move at all. If we could fix the exact moment and the exact points of an object in motion, indeed motion would be impossible. But actually we cannot fix them, because long before reaching exact point and exact moment, if they mean anything, space and time themselves get mixed up. From this arises the Uncertainty Principle in micro-physics. This principle lays down that Canonical conjugates like position and momentism cannot be simultaneously determined except within an uncertainty not less than  $h/4\pi$ .<sup>2</sup>

1. Nāgārjuna, *Madhyamaka Śāstra* (Mithilā Institute, 1960), p. 33, Ch. II, I. गतं न गम्यते तावद्गतं नैव गम्यते । गतागतविनिर्मुक्तं गम्यमानं न गम्यते ।
2. V. Rojansky, *Introductory Quantum Mechanics* (Asia, 1962), p. 125.



This mix-up of space-time also comes in Relativity theory. This mix-up represents a more profound inter-blend and inter-dependence of rest and motion. We ordinarily do not perceive any motion in earth. The sun appears to rise and set, while the earth is stationary. But closer examination gives the result that the earth goes round the sun at the rate of 18.5 miles per second, the sun goes round a larger star in the Milky-Way at a faster rate. So the earth must be moving at a fairly giddy speed. Michelson-Morley tried to determine earth's speed and direction of motion through space, by sending light rays in perpendicular directions over equal paths and noting the difference of the time taken. But they found the time equal along both the directions, giving the result that the earth has no net motion in space. Einstein interpreted this to mean that the net motion through space is there, but it is not knowable, because of Lorentz's contraction in the direction of motion.<sup>1</sup> It should be noted that such unknowable net motion of the earth is in the class of such other unknowable entities such as the substance in Western philosophy and either in pre-Relativity physics, and equally suspect. Therefore, if we take the result of Michelson-Morley experiment at its face value, it follows that in spite of all its apparent motion, earth has no net motion through space. So earth's motion figures in 4 ways:

1. Earth has no motion as seen with our senses unaided.
2. Earth has a determinable motion according to astronomical calculations.
3. Earth has a nondeterminable net motion through space according to Relativity interpretation.
4. Earth has no net motion through space according to the observable result of Michelson-Morley experiment.

Summing up the 4 results, we can say that the good earth is in an absolute sense both at rest and in motion simultaneously like all other bodies; this therefore is the very nature of rest and motion in an absolute sense. Hence the absolute is both moving

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1, Lorentz and others, *The Principle of Relativity* (Dover, Rpt from 1925), passim, A. Einstein, *The Meaning of Relativity* (Methuen, 1951), p. 34.

and non moving at once, तदेजति तन्नैजति which can also be interpreted to mean, '*that moves (all object) and also does not move (them).*'

### Newton's First Law of Motion is stated thus

'A body continues in its state of rest or uniform motion in a straight line, unless it is acted on by external impressed force.'<sup>1</sup> This is carefully stated, because, as we have seen, in itself there is no way of distinguishing between rest and uniform motion in a straight line. According to Einstein's identification of inertia and gravitation, there is also no way of distinguishing between rest and accelerated motion at a spot.

Thus the religious statement that the ultimate reality is at once moving and nonmoving is verifiable both psychologically and physically. But the following scientific statement is not yet verifiable :

Above we have seen that Einstein has not taken the result of Michelson-Morely experiment at its face value, but interpreted it according to Lorentz's contraction in the direction of motion. But we know that Relativity theory is only a closer approximation to facts of nature than the Newtonian system, and itself stands in need of correction. Hence, if we give the direct result of Michelson-Morley equal probability, we have the following disjunctive scientific statement :

1. 'There is no absolute motion of earth through space V there is an absolute motion of the earth through space, but it is not knowable due to Lorentz's contraction.'

2. On the basis of Michelson-Morley experiment we prove that the above disjunctive statement is true because one of the disjuncts is true. But we do not know which disjunct is true. Therefore, Michelson-Morley experiment cannot be said to give proper verification of the above scientific statement. For proper verification it is not enough to know on the basis of experience that a given proposition is true, but it is necessary to know how it is true. Hence the above scientific statement is not verifiable yet.

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1. D. E. Rutherford, *Classical Mechanics* (Cliver & Boyd, 1951), p. 19.



Similar is the case of all scientific hypothesis that have also rival hypotheses, before a crucial experiment decides in favour of one. Such is wave-particle duality in explanation of light and matter in Physics, and the chances of crucial experiment deciding one way or other appears rather slender. Nevertheless such hypotheses and theories continue to be scientific. And inspite of being verifiable the *Upaniṣadic mantra*, considered above, continues to be religious.

The popular conception is that all religious statements are non-verifiable and all scientific statements are verifiable. This can be symbolically put as,  $(x) (R \supset \sim V_x)$ .  $(y) (S_y \supset V_y)$ . In refutation of this view, we have shown that at least one religious statement is verifiable, and one scientific statement is not verifiable yet. symbolically  $(\exists x) (R_x \supset V_x)$ .  $(\exists y) (S_y \supset \sim V_y)$ .

Before explaining the meaning of the rest of the *mantra*, we have to consider the meaning of the following related *mantra* from *Kāthopaniṣad*, "Smaller than the small, larger than the large, *Ātman* is hidden in the cave (*hṛdayākāśa*) of the living creature. The person who has transcended sorrow, perceives it, through purity of his substance."

अणोरणीयान्महतो महीयानात्मास्य जन्तोर्निहितो गुहायाम् ।

तमक्रतुः पश्यति वीतशोको धातुप्रसादान्महिमानमात्मनः ॥ I, 2, 2C.

Here the relativity of all sizes in *Ātman* is mentioned just as above we saw the relativity of motion and rest. It is necessary to make its meaning clear for understanding the remaining portion of the *mantra* from *Isopaniṣad*. This relativity can also be seen both psychologically and physically. Objects appear of different sizes at different distances and at different ages. Which of these sizes is to be taken as the true size of any given object. Berkeley pointed out that there are feet in insects barely perceptible to human eye, but to these insects their feet must be appearing as of fair size. Considering that the earth is no more than a tiny speck of dust in astronomical space, the sizes as they occur in our daily life are certainly in no way actual or true sizes. Earth is certainly a drop suspended in space, in which we see an ocean.

According to the theory of Lorentz's contraction, objects change their lengths according to their speed of motion.

In another article, we have tried to show how on the basis of the set theory, we can regard Mt. Meru and a mustard seed as equal ( मेरुसर्पयोरपि साम्यप्रसङ्गः ). According to *Chāṇaogya Upaniṣad*, this condensing of Mt. Meru into a mustard seed is all the time occurring in nature. The big Banyan tree is condensed into tiny seeds barely visible, that again yield huge trees capable of sheltering a herd of elephants. This, nature's conjuries trick, is all the while going on before our eyes.<sup>1</sup>

It is precisely because the infinity can be compressed within the infinitesimal that 'what is outside is inside and what is far is near', and 'Ātman which is at once infinitesimal and infinite, is hidden in the cave of *hṛdayākāśa*.' Now *hṛdayākāśa* is not to be taken literally as the space in the heart. It is rather the spot where the attention is focussed on the spark of consciousness (*cidbindu*) in *yoga*. The external universe is contained in this spark of consciousness, which is one with the ocean of consciousness referred earlier. This is the theory of perception accepted by *Upaniṣads*, Advaita Vedānta, Sāṅkhya, Yoga and Buddhism. What is really perceived in the *hṛdayākāśa* and really known there (*Avyakta* infinitesimal Prakṛti in contact with Ātman), is thence projected outside in space and time. The clearest statement of this theory is in *Chāṇaogya Upaniṣad*, where the perceptor is advised to ask the disciple to concentrate his attention in the space of *dahara-ṇḍarika*, heart-lotus. If the student should inquire why he is asked to do so, the teacher should explain that just as there are sun and moon, stars and lightening in the outer space so these are there in the inner space of the heart also.<sup>2</sup>

Thus there are two rival theories of our perception of the world, one the above religious theory, the other common sense and scientific theory, the first holds that ideas in cosmic-consciousness are partly revealed to our minds, as its *tamas* is partially removed, and these are projected outside in space and time, the second holds that the external world, in space and time,

1. *Anvikṣikī* (Jan. 1973), *Future Course of Indian Philosophy*, p. 79 f.

2. *Chāṇaogya Upaniṣad*, VIII, 1, 3.



is given, and by stimulating our eyes and brain its ideas or experience is produced in our mind, and on their basis we perceive it.<sup>1</sup>

Both the above rival theories are *anupasanmāri* or all inclusive. Both cover all objects of perception. Hence no single or group of perceptible data can verify either of them. And in this respect the scientific theory is in the same position as the religious theory. That it appears to be correct is no reason at all for accepting it to be correct; sun also appears to go round the earth, and as large as a penny. Therefore, here also we have to decide on the basis of probabilities. Penny-quick has argued, in a recent book, that he sees no reason why nature should have deceived us in thinking that there is an external world when all we have are certain corresponding subjective experiences, like sense-data. Nature, however, might have good reasons for such deception, if this kind of view is most helpful for propagation of the species. There are many instances of deceptive camouflage in nature as pointers, like the spots of a leopard like light and shade under trees. According to *Kāthopaniṣad* both sense data and the external world are based upon wrong extrovert nature of our senses. Truth is to be gained by attending inward to the contents of consciousness.

पराञ्चि खानि व्यतृणत्स्वयंभूस्तस्मात्पराङ् पश्यति नान्तरात्मन् ।

कश्चिद्दोरः प्रत्यगात्मानमैक्षदावृत्तचक्षुरमृतत्वमिच्छन् ॥ 2, 1, 1.

In effect this means that by constantly attending outside, we come to accept the external view of perception, and to realize the internal view, all we need is to attend inward. This does not appear to be a very unreasonable demand. What are the probabilities for the common sense-scientific view? The nerve-impulses that are supposed to carry the external stimuli to the occipital lobe of the brain are very different from these external stimuli, in case of vision (say). The occipital lobe itself is also not visible to itself, but is supposed to make visible external objects, on the basis of nerve impulses very different from the

1. For details vide *Trīṣaṅku's Vedānupacana in Taittirīya Upaniṣad* in *Prajñā* (1969), p. 104.

stimuli received from the objects. It is like a blind man reading Hommer's Illiad in the original Greek on the basis of a text of its Persian translation.

Among the cases considered above, the statements related to rest and motion and sizes are verifiable because even when they apply to all objects, they refer to clearly isolable and measurable qualities, and therefore they do not suffer from all-inclusiveness. All the other instances suffer from all-inclusiveness, and therefore there is special difficulty in verifying them. The case of kindness further suffers from being an evaluative statement.

Thus we have shown the following things in this paper :

1. *Anupasaṃhāri* (all-inclusive) cases that concern all objects of perception, cannot be verified by an instance of perception. Such cases arise both in science and religion. These can be judged only on the basis of probabilities based on all the perceptible data known.
2. For verification, it is not sufficient to have perceptual data to establish the truth of a proposition, it should also be known how this truth is established by perceptual data.
3. In this sense, we have pointed out an instance of religious proposition that can be verified, and a scientific statement, that cannot be verified yet.
4. On the above grounds, we find that non-verifiability cannot be a basis for accepting a special religious language. Hence there is no need of any special religious language. It is not denied that religion might have its own technical words like other disciplines such as medicine or technology. But these can be supplied by suitable extensions of the ordinary language.
5. In the next section, we shall show that all-inclusive or ineffable aspects of religion require a symbolic expression for reducing to human measure for easier comprehension, and, very often this is done by giving them anthropomorphic forms. It will also be shown that the concept of parental divine kindness has also such a symbolic significance, that provides an objective basis for the evaluative judgment of those who are more grateful by nature.



6. The opposites (dvandva) mentioned from Upaniṣads have a symbolic significance, as their kramārpaṇa really indicates saḥārpaṇa. This state is suggested, and there is also surprise in combining opposites contrary to the law of contradiction. These aspects of religious language will be considered next.

### Symbolic Expression for the Ineffable and the Formless in Religion

In the above account, certain religious statements, with very clear physical aspects were found verifiable, in those respects. But the ultimate synthesis of the dichotomies like rest and motion through their foundation in space and time, and thence in the ultimately the subjective and the objective, passes both beyond space and time, and the mind with its discursive categories.

In attempts to grasp this ultimate formless reality, a symbolic approach becomes necessary. In an attempt to grasp it with his own total personality, man very often endows it with an anthropomorphic garb. This is clearly stated in *Devatā Ākāra-Cintana* of the *Nirukta*, where God (gods) is at once said to be anthropomorphic and non-anthropomorphic.<sup>1</sup> In *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa* the question has been raised as to why the formless ultimate reality is endowed with forms in idols by Vajra, and in answer Mārkaṇḍeya explains that formless is painful to conceive for man, and therefore, it has to be endowed with human proportions for him;<sup>2</sup> thus the cosmic process is symbolised in the dance of Naṭarāja. Śiva here dances within a circle of fire, like cosmic emanation and dissolution in flames. As stated in *Māṇḍūkya Upaniṣad* this process is an expression of *Oṃkāra*, and therefore, Naṭarāja's body is shaped like *Oṃkāra*, rather as represented in Balinese language. His dance represents the

1. N. K. S. Telang and B. B. Chaubey, *The New Vedic Selection* (Prachya Bhārati, 1965), p. civ.

2. प्रकृतिर्विकृतिस्तस्य द्वे रूपे परमात्मनः ।

अलक्ष्यं तस्य तद्रूपं प्रकृतिः सा प्रकीर्तिता ॥

साकारा विकृतिर्बोधा तस्य सर्वं जगत्सूतम् (सूतम् ?) ।

पूजाध्यानादिकं कर्तुं साकारस्यैव शक्यते ॥ *Viṣṇudharmottara Purāṇa*, III, 46.

cosmic rhythm, further beaten out with his drum. The ultimate reality is also beyond sexes, as beyond other dichotomies, but still the basis of the sexes, and hence, Naṣarāja is Ardhanāriśvara.<sup>1</sup>

### Levels of Symbolism in Religion

Religion symbolism is not usually only at one level, but at different levels like sheaths within sheaths, for comprehension at different levels of maturity. Thus the story in *Kaṭhōpaniṣad* about Naciketā going to Yama to question him about death is an anthropomorphic version for ordinary men, but for the man of understanding, it is not meant literally, but emphasizes the necessity of solving the mystery of life and death for transcending them. Similarly, in Tantras, there is an inner worship and an outer worship. The latter is to be transcended for the first, in turn, to be transcended for self-realization. Thus, through myth and symbolic expressions, an attempt is made to lead mind, by easy steps, from ordinary levels of experience to the ineffable.

With the above ideas in mind, we can now try to grasp the symbolic meaning of the statement that God is kind like a parent. It can be taken as a symbolic expression for the fact that the success of mammals in the course of evolution shows that the very nature of reality lends support to parental care, that kindness is a better approach to life than violence, and those who will take up the sword will perish with the sword.

This aspect is also brought out in *Kaṭhōpaniṣad*, where Brahman is said to be the cosmic tree with root upward and branches down, because geneological tree is written like that, and also identified with semen (*śukra*) that sustains the world.<sup>2</sup> No attempt, however, is made to sugarcoat with the aspect of kindness, thus involved, the facts of death, diseases, or old age. The truth being the aim of religion, God was worshipped in Hinduism in both kind and terrible aspects, with the terrible aspect some-

1. For further details about this symbolism see *Art and Life* (1971-74), p. -4, fig. 10.

2. *Kaṭhōpaniṣad*, II, 3, 1.



times expressed in the explicit icon, as in case of Kālī, while the kindly aspect was put in the implicit icon (*yantra*).<sup>1</sup> The idea of God as 'the mother of mother...and so on' is well symbolized in a painting of Leonardo da Vinci, where Virgin with child Jesus, is, in turn, sitting herself in the Lap of her mother St. Anne.<sup>2</sup>

### Suggestive and Surprise Elements in Religious Language

As stated in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, words and mind return from that (reality-Brahman) unable to attain it.<sup>3</sup> For conveying ideas about it, therefore, resort was had to indicative (*lakṣaṇā*) and suggestive uses of language. Thus, according to Advaita Vedānta, *Mahāvākya*, like *Tattvamasi* conveys its meaning by *jahadajahallakṣaṇā*. Buddhism, also, did not believe in the efficiency of words or concepts for conveying the indefinable reality (*śvalakṣaṇa*). Indicative sense used, as a consequence, was called like 'moon on the bough' ( शाखाचन्द्र न्याय ) in India, and like finger pointing the moon in Zen parlance. Suggestive uses of language, as studied in texts like *Dhvanyāloka*, also come very handy for religious purposes, and that is why some of the great scriptures read like poetry. Tagore also said that where words failed music took him in religion.

Sometimes the element of surprise has also been used in religious language, both to jog the hearer out of the common rut, and to convey the ineffable, as in the mystic utterances of the seer Vāmadeva in *Taittirīya Upaniṣad*, Zen Buddhists, and Kabir. For instance, Kabir said that in *yogic* experience it is found that by reverse roles Ganges absorbs the ocean. Mirā's songs are full of simple suggestive wealth of thought, like, "They

1. *Bindu and Tāntric Iconography*-V in *Bharat Manisha* ( July, 1978 ), p. 5 f.

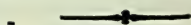
2. L. Goldscheider, *Leonardo da Vinci* (Phaidon, 1959), pls. 54, 68.

3. यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते अप्राप्य मनसा सह । आनन्दं ब्रह्मणो विद्वान् न विभेति कदाचन ॥  
11, 4.

4. T. D. Suzuki, *Zen Buddhism and Japanese Culture* (Routledge, 1959), Ch. VII, Appendix I.

write to their beloved ones in far off places, but my beloved is in my heart—joy inexpressible. Or, "With tears have I tended the creeper of love." Or we have from Kabir, Those who have poured on books have learnt little, but he who has picked up two and a half letters of PREMA ( प्रेम - love ) is indeed wise.

All these devices are open to study, and their relations with ordinary language can very well be worked out, after the manner of Ānandavardhana on poetic language. Thus there is no point in the idle attempt to isolate religious language into a separate queer category reserved for the more muddle-headed and the less intelligent.





## WHAT IS RELIGIOUS LANGUAGE ?

By

HARSH NARAIN

Does religious language mean the language of religious preachers or scriptures ? Religious preachers and scriptures use both kinds of language, religious and non-religious. Being creatures of the world having to deal with other creatures of the world, religious preachers cannot avoid the use of non-religious language. Even while discoursing upon religion, they have to make a lot of non-religious statements. Muḥammad was allergic to onion for its bad smell. He even dissuaded his followers from attending the mosque after eating onion. But this was all non-religious : no such provision finds place in the Qur'ān or the Ḥadīth as an article of faith. So, the language used by Muḥammad in this regard cannot be said to be religious. In fact, Islam does, generally and roughly, tend to recognize the distinction between the 'legislative ( tashrī'ī ) and non-legislative functions of the prophet, corresponding to what we have called his religious and non-religious statements.

In the same way, scriptures, too, are believed to contain religious as well as non-religious statements. According to a well attested Vaiṣṇava tradition, scriptural language (śāstra-bhāṣā) is of three kinds: samādhi-bhāṣā (language of religious experience), laukikī bhāṣā (empirical/secular language), and parakīyā bhāṣā (language of quotation/citation) :

Samādhi - bhāṣā prathamā, laukikī 'ti tathā 'parā,  
Tṛtīyā parakīyeti śāstra - bhāṣā tridhā smṛtā.

This floating verse seems to derive from Vallabha's statement of the three kinds of language constitutive of the *Śrīmad-Bhāgavata*. According to him, when the *Bhāgavata* narrates some-

thing, as, for example, 'when it was dawn etc.',<sup>1</sup> it uses empirical language; when it quotes/cites some authority, as, for example, 'I heard it from the mouth of Dvaipāyana',<sup>2</sup> it uses the language of quotation/citation; and, when its author describes his own trance-experience, it uses the language of religious experience.<sup>3</sup> So, all scriptural language is not religious language.

Even such scriptures as the Vedas, which are believed to be self-existent or divinely authored, have both kinds of language, religious as well as non-religious. The Vedic texts are of two kinds, Mantra (primary text) and Brāhmaṇa (secondary, exegetical and philosophical text). The Mantra-text is primarily and basically assertive (abhidhāyaka) of substances and deities involved in the sacrifice,<sup>4</sup> whereas the Brāhmaṇa text is injunctive (vidhi) with arthavāda (declamatory text) to subserve the injunction, directly or indirectly.<sup>5</sup> The injunctive portion alone is the true Brāhmaṇa-text, the arthavāda portion being just an adjunct to it. That is why Āpastamba defines the Brāhmaṇa-text as the text commendatory of sacrificial activity (Karma-codanā Brāhmaṇāni).<sup>6</sup> The Nyāya-Sūtra defines vidhi as injunctive (vidhāyaka).<sup>7</sup> Sāyaṇa postulates two kinds of vidhi: commendatory of action (apavṛtti-pravartaka) and revealer of the unknown (ajñāta-jñāpaka). The second includes such metaphysical statements as 'It was the Ātman alone which was in the beginning' (Ātmā vā idam eka evāgra āsīt).<sup>8</sup> This second

1. *Śrīmad-Bhāgavatā* (6th ed., Gorakhpur, Gita Press, 2010 Vikramī) 10, 70, 1.
2. *Ibid.* 6, '4, 9.
3. *Taittirīyārthadīpa-Nibandha*, Śāstrārtha-Prakāraṇa, with auto-commentary *Prakāśa*, Kedar Nath Mishra, ed. & tr. (Varanasi: Bharatiya Vidya Prakashan, 1971), 7, p. 28.
4. *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, with *Sūbara-Bhāṣya*, *Tanira-Vārtika*, and *Tup-Tikā*, Subba Shastri, ed., Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, No. 97 (Poona: Anandasrama, 1933-36), 2, 1, 31, read with *Vājasaneyi-Prātiśākhya-Tikā*, 1, 4.
5. *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, 2, 1, 31 ff., with the commentaries. Also see *Āpastamba-Yajñaparibhāṣā-Sūtra*, 34-35.
6. *Āpastamba-Yajñaparibhāṣā-Sūtra*, 34.
7. *Nyāya-Sūtra* with *Nyāya-Bhāṣya*, Ganga Nath Jha, ed., Poona Oriental Series, No. 58 (Poona: Oriental Book Agency, 1939), 2, 1, 64.
8. Sāyaṇa, *Ṛgvedubhāṣyopākramaṇikā*, *Vśādhāṣyabhūmiṇī* - *Saṅgraha*,



kind of vidhi is not accepted by the Mīmāṃsakas, however. Āpastamba defines arthavāda as valedictory (stuti), deprecatory (nindā), illustrative (parakṛti), and narrative (purākalpa). He is followed in this by the *Nyāya-Sūtra*.<sup>1</sup> Yāska grants to arthavāda the status of the Brāhmaṇa-text.<sup>2</sup> Some, however, are inclined to demur to this view.<sup>3</sup>

The scripture sometimes narrates an event which never took place (asadvṛttāntānvākhyāna),<sup>4</sup> with a view to commending or eulogizing something laid down in the vidhi-text, tempting, prompting, or attracting the agent to perform the act. Such texts are arthavāda texts, which are not authoritative on their own (svārthe) but as subsidiary to injunctive texts. They can, therefore, be said to exemplify religious language only by courtesy.

The *Vyāsa-Bhāṣya*<sup>5</sup> seems to suggest, as brought out by Hariharānanda Āraṇya,<sup>6</sup> that it is not the whole of the scriptural text (āgama) but only the part of it containing realized truths needs to be regarded as scripture proper and, therefore, we are tempted to suggest, as representing religious language the remaining part serving only to iterate popular beliefs and sayings.<sup>7</sup> So, a religious scripture is not all religious language.

The Qur'ān has a different story to tell, however. It con-

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Baladeva Upadhyaya, ed., Kashi Sanskrit Series, No. 102 (2nd ed., Varanasi : Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1938), p. 24.

1. *Āpastamba-Yajñaparibhūṣā-Sūtra*, 37.
2. *Nyāya-Sūtra*, 2, 1, 65.
3. Cp. *Nirukta*, with *Nirukta-Vṛtti*, V. K. Rajavade, ed., Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, No. 88 ( Poona : Anandasrama Sanskrit Series, 921 ), 12, 2, 3; 7, 7, 2.
4. *Śābara-Bhāṣya*, 1, 2, 10.
5. *Vyāsa-Bhāṣya*, with *Yoga-Sūtra*, *Bhāsvatī-Vṛtti*, *Pūtañjala-Rahasya*, *Tattvavaiśāradi*, and *Yoga-Vārtika*, Damodaralal Shastri, ed., Kashi Sanskrit Series, No. 110 (Varanasi : Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1935), 1, 7, p. 32.
6. *Bhāsvatī-Vṛtti*, 1, 7, p. 32.
7. Cp. *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, 1, 2, 1.

demns those who are wont to follow part of it in disregard of other parts of it.<sup>1</sup> Of course, it is interpretable even otherwise. It can be construed to mean, for example, that its commands and injunctions are all binding upon the followers of Islam, even though all its language might not be religious language in the technical sense of the term.

Indeed, the Mīmāṃsā system conceives Dharma as symbolized by injunction (codanā).<sup>2</sup> Declamation and description/assertion (abhidhāna) come only as auxiliaries to it. In the Qur'ān, too, there is a kindred distinction between āyātu 'l-muḥkamāt and āyātu 'l-mutashābihāt, between verses categorical and allegorical, definitive and figurative, precise and metaphorical, perspicuous and allusive, literal and analogical, definite and problematical.<sup>3</sup> Verses of the first kind are described as primary and basic on s, as the chief constituents and mother of the Qur'ān (ummu 'l-Kitāb), relegating verses of the other kind to a secondary status for human purposes.<sup>4</sup> In the Mīmāṃsā parlance, the former verses constitute Mantra and vidhi, where as the latter, whatever their intrinsic worth, are employed as declamatory to them, with this difference, however, that, unlike in the case of Mīmāṃsā, the Qur'ān adjudges the latter to be of deeper significance beyond the ken of human beings.<sup>5</sup>

Being emboldened by this conception of arthavāda, Mīmāṃsakas like Kumārila as well as Advaitins like Gauḍapāda, Maṇḍana, Śaṅkara tend to accord step-motherly treatment to the Vedic narratives of creation and to give to Vedic cosmogony a decent burial by lightly dismissing it as mere myth or fiction calculated at best to conduce to renunciation or self-realization in an indirect way.<sup>6</sup>

1. Al-Baqarah, 85.

2. *Mīmāṃsā-Sūtra*, 1, 1, 2.

3. Āl-i Imrān 7; Hūd 1.

4. Āl-i Imrān 7.

5. *Loc. cit.*

6. Kumārila, *Tantra-Vārtika* 1, 3, 2, Vol. I, p. 168; Maṇḍana, *Brahma-Siddhi*, S. Kṛṣṇaswami Sastri, ed., Madras Government Oriental Manuscripts Series, No. 4 (Madras : Government Press, 1937), pp. 124-128;



That the metaphysical statements contained in the Upaniṣads, such as 'The Ātman alone was there in the beginning', is a kind of injunction, revelatory of the unknown (ajñāta-jñāpaka), is an Advaitic innovation designed to buttress and boost the prestige of the knowledge-part (Upaniṣad) of the Vedas vis-a-vis their ritual part (Brāhmaṇa). It appears that Sāyaṇa, who seems to be the first Advaitin responsible for this innovation, took his cue from Śabara's statement that Codanā, technically injunction, is capable of revealing even such objects or entities as are past, present, future, subtle, hidden, or remote (Codanā hi bhūtaṁ, bhavantaṁ, bhaviṣyantaṁ, sūkṣmaṁ, vyavahitaṁ, viprakṣtaṁ ity evaṁ-jātiyakam arthaṁ śaknoty avagamayitum).<sup>1</sup> It appears at first sight to mean that injunction deals with not only action but also knowledge of entities, physical and metaphysical. But Prabhākara and Śalikanātha have it that injunction can reveal things only as connected with action and that, therefore, they are also conducive to action.<sup>2</sup> Kumārila identifies injunction with word, which does reveal entities past, present, and future.<sup>3</sup>

The Mīmāṃsā division of the Vedas into vidhi and non-vidhi, so to speak, and emphasis on the former, with the latter rendered meaningless save as subservient to the former, directly or indirectly, serves to mar the glory of the Upaniṣads altogether.

Gauḍapāda, *Mūṇḍūkya-Kārikā* with *Mūṇḍūkya-Upaniṣad* and Śaṅkara's *Mūṇḍūkya-Kārikā-Bhāṣya* (5th ed., Gorakhpur : Gita Press, 2009 Vikramī), Advaita-Prakaraṇa 15; Śaṅkara, *Mūṇḍūkya-Kārikā-Bhāṣya*, Advaita-Prakaraṇa 7, 15; *Aitareya-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya* (5th ed., Gorakhpur : Gita Press, 2009 Vikramī), 2, 1; *Taittirīya-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya* (4th ed., Gorakhpur : Gita Press, 2003 Vikramī), 2, 6; *Chāndogya-Upaniṣad-Bhāṣya* (5th ed., Gorakhpur : Gita Press, 2023 Vikramī), 6, 2, 3.

1. *Śabara-Bhāṣya* 1, 1, 2.
2. *Bṛhatī*, with Śalikanātha's *Ājupimalā-Pāñcikā*, Tarkapāda, S. K. Ramanaṭha Shastri, ed., Madras University Sanskrit Series, No. 3, Part I (Madras : University of Madras, 1934), 1, 1, 2, p. 23.
3. *Mīmāṃsā-Śloka-Vārtika*, with *Nyāya-Ratnākara*, Rama Shastri Tailanga Manavalli ed., Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series, No. 3 (Varanasi : Chowkhamba Sanskrit Series Office, 1898), 1, 1, 2, verse 7, p. 35.

That is perhaps why, in defence of the Upaniṣads, Vallabha had to rule that the words of the Vedic roots deserve to be taken on their face-value rather than interpreted metaphorically :

Ye dhātu-śabdāḥ yasyārthe upadeśe prakīrtitāḥ  
Tathaivārtho Veda-rāśeḥ kartavyo, nānyathā kvacit.<sup>1</sup>

In Islam, too, a controversy once raged round the question whether the verses of the Qur'ān should be interpreted literally or metaphorically. The school of the Ḥashwīyah was strongly in favour of literal interpretation. Imām Aḥmad bin Ḥanbal also favoured literal interpretation, but he made exceptions to this rule on three occasions. Imām Abu 'l-Ḥasan Ash'arī, too, resorted to literal interpretation where to others the justification for metaphorical was obvious.<sup>2</sup>

It may also be noted that, according to the Mīmāṃsakas, the scriptural (Vedic) language is the same as ordinary language, their words and denotation being the same. Otherwise, it would be difficult to understand the Vedic injunction.<sup>3</sup> The Qur'ān has it that each time, clime, and people has its own revelation couched in its own idiom.<sup>4</sup> That is why all known revelations are tradition-bound, bearing the stamp of their own respective cultural milieus. So, it abounds in local idiom, local metaphor. The Qur'ān was revealed to the Arabs in their own language, Arabic, abounding in the categories of thought and expression peculiar to the Arabs, even though it claims to reiterate in essentials what was delivered by the galaxy of older prophets.<sup>5</sup> The Old Testament, too, regards revelation as varied and variegated.<sup>6</sup>

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1. Vallabha, *Patrāvulambana*, Govindalal H. Bhatta, ed. (Bombay : Sri Pastimargiya Yuvaka Parisad, 1960), 4, p. 3.
  2. Shibli No'amani, *Al-Kalām* (Lucknow : Shibli Book-Depot, 1340 Hijr), pp. 139 ff.
  3. *Śūbara-Bhūṣya* 1, 3, 30.
  4. Ar-R'ad 7; An-Nahl 36, 63; Al-Fāṭir 24.
  5. Yūnus 37; Hā Mīm As-Sajdah 43.
  6. Hebrews 1, 1.



So, religious language is not philologically different from ordinary language. It is nothing but ordinary language put to religious use, used to communicate religious truths, religious experience. Religious language has the same relation to ordinary language as any technical language—philosophical language, mathematical language, and suchlike—has to ordinary language. The difference in the forms of religious language is due to the difference in its vehicles. Take, for example, the language of prayer, which goes the longest in orienting the individual towards the source of his being. The form of the language of prayer is determined by the type of the individual offering the prayer. Rūmī, the greatest mystic poet of Islam, records Moses as chiding a shepherd boy for offering his prayer to God in his native language which Moses found too vulgar for God. Upon this, writes Rūmī, God censured Moses saying that He had given a language, an idiom, to everyone suited to his temperament, that He marks not appearance and expression (qāl) but reality and meaning (ḥāl), for the heart is substance and language only attribute :

Har kase rā-iṣṭilāḥ-i dādah īm  
 Har kase rā sīrat-i bi-nihādah īm  
 Mā burūn rā na-ngarīm o qāl rā  
 Mā durūn rā bi-ngarīm o ḥāl rā  
 'Zān ki dīl jauhar buwad, guftan araz  
 Bas ṭufail āmad araz, jauhar gharaz.<sup>1</sup>

Religious literature has three orders—first-order literature, second order literature, and third-order literature. First-order literature is such revealed or inspired and therefore self-certifying, literature as constitutes the fountain-head of the religion concerned. Second-order literature is also partly revealed or inspired but mediated by and subservient to the first-order literature. Third-order literature is all other religious literature, especially such as is designed to inquire into the rationale of the

1. Rūmī, *Mathnawī-i M'ānawī*, Muhammad Yusuf Shah, ed., under the title *Paiṛāhan-i Yūsufī* (Lucknow: Nawal Kishore Press, 1947), Vol. III, p. 85.

things religious. R̥ṣi-s (seers)<sup>1</sup> and prophets are responsible for the inception of the first-order literature; Śruta-r̥ṣi-s (second-order seers aided by the first-order seers),<sup>2</sup> on the one hand and apostles, companions (ṣahābah), direct disciples of the prophets, and saints (awliyā) on the other, of the second-order literature; and Tarka-r̥ṣi-s (third-order seers called philosophers)<sup>3</sup> or, to use a Vedic expression, Oha-Brahman-s (philosopher-sages),<sup>4</sup> or Ulamā' (divines) and Mujtahidūn (interpreters), of the third-order literature. The first-order literature is technically styled 'Śruti', 'Waḥy', or revelation; the second-order, 'Smṛti', 'Ḥadīth', and Tradition; and the third-order, 'Itihāsa-Purāṇa' on the one hand and 'Nibandha', 'Tafsīr' (commentary), and 'Fiqh' (theology-cum-jurisprudence) on the other. The Hindu scriptures sometimes suggest that whatever a self-knower has to say is tantamount to revelation.<sup>5</sup> Muḥammad is also reported to have remarked that Muslim divines are like the prophets of Israel (Ulamā'i ummat-i ka-anbiā'i Banī Isrā'il).

According to the *Kāvya-Mīmāṃsā*, the language of revelation is of three kinds : Brāhma, Śaiva, and Vaiṣṇava—that is, the language of Brahman (masculine) and, his family of Śiva, and of Viṣṇu—the lord gods responsible for revelation. Of these, the language of Brahman is of five kinds : Svāyambhuva (of Svayambhū or Brahman himself), Aiśvara (of the Īśvara-s that are the mental sons, like Bhṛgu and others, of Brahman), Ārṣa (of the R̥ṣi-s that are the sons of the Īśvara-s), Ārṣika (of the R̥ṣika-s that are the sons of the R̥ṣi-s), and Ārṣiputraka-s (of the Ārṣiputra-s that are the sons of the R̥ṣika-s).<sup>6</sup> All these kinds have been defined and illustrated by Rājaśekhara.<sup>7</sup> This topic is also

1. *Nirukta* 1, 0.

2. *Loc. cit.*, with Durga's commentary.

3. *Nirukta* 13, 12.

4. (*Śaśīr-yā Śākalā*) *Ṛg Veda-Saṃhitā* 10, 71, 8, read with *Nirukta* 13, 13.

5. *Mahābhārata* ( Gorakhpur : Gita Press, 2012-2015 Vikramī), Śānti-Parvan 268, 10.

6. *Kāvya-Mīmāṃsā*, Kedar Nath Sharma Sarasvata, ed. (2nd ed., Patna : Bihar Rashtrabhasha Parishad, 1965), pp. 72 ff. (Chapter VII).

7. *Loc. cit.*



dealt with in certain Purāṇa-s.<sup>1</sup> Incidentally, the *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa* speaks of seven kinds of the language of the Ṛṣi-s, without describing them, however.<sup>2</sup>

The differences in religious language described above are said to owe their origin to the circumstances of the genesis of the various revealed texts (mantra-dṛṣṭi-s)<sup>3</sup> or asbābu 'n-nuzūl (causes of the revelations). The circumstances of the genesis of the various Vedic texts are, queer enough, reported to be quite secular, such as discontent (a-santoṣa), fear (bhaya), suffering (duḥkha), happiness (sukha), and sorrow (śoka).<sup>4</sup> Many of the verses of the Qur'ān, too, are reported to have come down to Muḥammad to set right what had gone wrong in his family,<sup>5</sup> etc.

It has also to be noted in this connexion that no revealed book can be taken to be a revelation in its entirety. Only the prophetic books of the Old Testament, constituting nearly half of it, are regarded as revealed. In the Ṛg-Veda, there are four hymns<sup>6</sup> which contain Viśvāmitra's curses against Vasiṣṭha and hence are not heard or read by the descendants of the latter.<sup>7</sup> It is difficult to regard them as revealed or even religious.

In any case, it is significant that all revelation is not thought to be of equal status in the Hindu tradition. The Upaniṣads, for example, divide even the revealed texts into higher knowledge (parā vidyā) and lower knowledge (a-parā vidyā).<sup>8</sup> The sayings of the Buddha, too, are divided into those bearing

1. See, for example, *Brahmāṇḍa-Purāṇa*, J. L. Shastri, ed. (Delhi : Patna : Varanasi : Motilal Banarasisidass, 1973), 1, 2, 33, 23 ff.

2. *Ibid.*, 1, 1, 100.

3. *Ibid.*, 1, 2, 33, 23.

4. *Ibid.*, 1, 2, 32, 68, for example.

5. At-Taḥrīm 1-5.

6. (*Śūkalā Śaiśir:yā*) *Ṛg-Veda-Saṃhitā* 3, 53, 21-24.

7. *Bṛhad-Devatā*, A. A. Macdonell, ed. (2nd issue, Delhi : Patna : Varanasi : Harvard Oriental Series, Vol. V, 4, 23. Cp. *Nirukta-Vṛtti* 4, 14, Vol. I, p. 323.

8. *Muṇḍaka-Upaniṣad* ( 5th ed., Gorakhpur : Gita Press, 2009 Vikramī ), 1, 1, 4.

outward, empirical meanings (neyārtha) and those bearing inward, transcendental meanings (nītārtha).<sup>1</sup> Sūfism, too, has a kindred distinction to make, the distinction between apparent or exoteric (majāzī) on the one hand and real or esoteric (ḥaqīqī) meaning of the Qur'ān on the other. Śābara observes that there are Vedic texts which are not helpful to us here or hereafter and thus are not fit to be followed in practice.<sup>2</sup>

Religious experience or revelation, in its pristine purity, is translanguagual, translatable in various languages. It is published first in the language of the subject, giving the impression that its own language is the language of the subject. That the content of revelation is translanguagual is well attested to by the fact that it translates in different languages. First, there is revelation pure and simple, having a translanguagual character. Then, there is what is called auto-interpretation, interpretation by the subject himself. Lastly, there is what is called hetero-interpretation, interpretation by others—by compilers, codifiers, doxographers. This is a modern distinction almost echoing the Buddhist distinction between siddhānta-naya (pure revelation/realization) and deśanā-naya (communication/interpretation).<sup>3</sup> Ninian Smart discovers several types of interpretation constituting 'auto-interpretation': interpretation after experience, called 'retrospective interpretation'; interpretation during experience, called 'reflective interpretation'; interpretation colouring the content of experience, called 'incorporated interpretation'.<sup>4</sup> Well, Muḥammad Ali aptly remarks:

1. *Āṅgustara-Nikāya*, Bhikṣu Jagadish Kashyap, Nalanda Devanagari Pali Series (Nalanda : Pali Publication Board, 1960), *Duka-Nipāta*, Bāla-Vagga 4, p. 57; *Samūlhirāja-Sūtra*, 7, 5, quoted in *Madhyamaka-Śāstra-Prasannapadā*, with *Madhyamaka-Śāstra*, P. L. Vaidya ed., Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, No. 10 (Darbhanga : Mithila Institute, 1960), p. 14; *Madhyamaka-Śāstra-Prasannapadā* 1, 3, pp. 13-14.
2. 'Yadyapi śrūyerans tathā'py anupakārikatvān naiva kartavyā bhaveyuh.' *Śābara-Bhāṣya* 3, 1, 7.
3. *Laṅkāvatāra-Sūtra*, P. L. Vaidya, ed., Buddhist Sanskrit Texts, No. 3 (Darbhanga : Mithila Institute, 1963), 3, 14-15, p. 60.
4. Ninian Smart, 'Interpretation and Mystical Experience', *Religious Studies*, (1965), I, pp. 75-87.



'The Qur'ān is God's word truly enough, but it is in man's ill coin.'<sup>1</sup>

If the relevant verses of the Qur'ān are taken at their face-value, they will seem to suggest that not only the meaning but also the word of the Qur'ān is the work of God. The Qur'ān sometimes refers to itself as 'the word of God' (kalāma Allāh),<sup>2</sup> revealed in Arabic.<sup>3</sup> Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī regards the meaning as the clad (malbūs) or content and the word as the clothing (libās) or continent, ascribing both to the authorship of God.<sup>4</sup> Iqbal also regards the word of the Qur'ān as the work of God.<sup>5</sup> But some very competent Muslim thinkers have come to the conclusion that God's attribute of speech (kalām) is essentially a unity without diversity in respect of meaning (madlūl), diversity residing in expression (dalālat) only. If the meaning is expressed in Hebrew, it is the Torah; if in Arabic, the Qur'ān. So, it is the expressions or sentences that are various and variegated, not the meanings (kalām). Ibn Kalāb and Abū'l-Ḥasan Ash'arī are of the same view.<sup>6</sup> Ibn Sīnā observes that 'God is eloquent' (mutakallim) does not mean that He uses sentences or concepts represented by words but that God gives knowledge to the prophet which does not admit of diversity (ta'addud wa takassur). The Qur'ān says that God's command is instantaneous like the twinkling of an eye.<sup>7</sup> He does not have to recite sentences. The Prophet received knowledge through the creative intelligence (al-aqlu fa'a'al) called an angel and his creative imagination gave words to it. Then the Prophet's heart/mind, originally as if a tabula rasa, became full of words, so that he could hear well constructed sentences and passages, witnessing somebody deliver-

1. Muhammad Ali, *My Life, a Fragment* (Lahore, 1942), p. 276.

2. At-Taubah 6.

3. Ar-R'ad 37, for example.

4. See *Maklūbāt-i Mujaddid-i Alf-i Thānī*, quoted in Sa'id Ahmad Akbarabadi, *Wahy-i Ilāhī*, Silsilah-i Nadwatu 'l-Muṣannifīn, No. 11 (2nd impression, Delhi : Nadwatu 'l-Muṣannifīn, 1952), pp. 109-110.

5. See Akbarabadi, pp. 110-111.

6. *Ibid.*, p. 107.

7. Al-Qamar 50.

ing it.<sup>1</sup> So, according to Ibn Sinā, the meaning of the revelation is God-made, but the word of the revelation is man-made, unconsciously though. The Mutakallimūn maintain that eloquence (kalām) is twofold, verbal eloquence (al-kalāmu lafzī) and eloquence of meaning (al-kalāmu naṣī).<sup>2</sup> Akbarabadi quotes Arabic verses to show that, when a lover and a beloved talk with the eyes, they do not have to use words. Words only follow the talk. Eloquence resides in the heart, the tongue simply gives it expression.<sup>3</sup>

Well, revelation is the substance and interpretations accidents. One has to try to penetrate beyond the accidents to reach the substance. And the pure revelation thus discovered will be found to be in much greater harmony with other specimens of pure revelation than the recorded forms of revelation appear to be. Much of their mutual differences and contradictions will then turn out to be due to the different planes of existence, levels of truth, and strata of value they represent. Interpreters of religious, especially revelational, language must bear this fact in mind.

Yes, recorded revelation cannot be taken at its face-value. The record runs the risk of being fallible, misleading, and far from faithful. The poet has well sung : 'Alas' the honey of my idea has turned sour just after coming into the bottles of words :

Afsos ! ki turshī ho gayā shahd-i kḥayāl  
Alfāz ki botaloñ meñ āte āte.

The meaning of revelation ever struggles to find expression in language but never succeeds in finding full expression in language. The seer or prophet is obliged to use a particular language, a particular idiom, to communicate his revelation, but others take it as the only language, the only idiom, in which the revelation could be couched, unmindful of the patent fact that reality is bigger than its expression in a particular language.

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1. Ibn Sinā, *Ar-Risālatu 'l-'Arsh'ah*, quoted in Akbarabadi, pp. 29-30.
  2. See Akbarabadi, p. 101.
  3. *Ibid.*, pp. 113-114.



'Language is smaller than the mind (or idea)' (Vāg vai manaso hrasīyaśī), says the *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*.<sup>1</sup>

That is why the linguistic analyst who takes the language actually used as holding the mirror up to reality in toto can never hope to reach the heart or spirit of revelation. All language is translation, and translation can never hope to represent the original in toto. Revelational language, the best specimen of religious language, is marked by a variety of levels of significance varying in verifiability and value. The polyvalence of linguistic expressions, as, for example, in the Vedic texts, is conducive to the development of different levels of significance. Intimations from, or experiences of, unobservable phenomena tend to find expression in terms of observable phenomena as myths, metaphors, or 'mutashābihāt', not susceptible to the criteria of science, logic, or linguistic analysis. The question of their determination and truth conditions can be decided, if at all, by comparing and collating the various religious experiences available to us. In any case, religion tends gradually to outgrow language and regain its translingual matrix. Rūmī aspires to reach the level where language grows without words.

Ai Kḥudā ! bi-nmā tu jān rā ān maqām

K' andar ū bī-ḥarf mī rüyad kalām.<sup>2</sup>

According to the Qur'ān, so far as we can see, knowledge (ilmu 'l-yaqīn) seeks certainty (ḥaqqu 'l-yaqīn), which, in its turn, seeks vision (aynu 'l-yaqīn).<sup>3</sup>

Religious language is language about the transnatural and the transcendent as the ground and goal of the natural and the immanent/empirical.

The transnatural and transcendent as such has no language whatsoever, is unspeakable. That is why the Mādhyamikas would describe it as the state of silence (tūṣṇīm-bhāva);<sup>4</sup> they and the

1. *Śatapatha-Brāhmaṇa*, Satyavrata Samasrami, ed., Bibliotheca Indica (Calcutta : Asiatic Society of Bengal, 1903), 1, 4, 4, 7.

2. Rūmī, *Mathnawī-i M'ānawī*, Vol. I, pp. 61, 264.

3. At-Takāsūr 5, 7; Al-H'qqatah 51.

4. *Mādhyamaka-Śāstra-Prasannapadū* 1, 3, p. 19.

*Māṇḍūkya-Ūpaniṣad*, as the cessation of all speech (prapañco-paśama);<sup>1</sup> Bādhva, as the silent (upaśānta';<sup>2</sup> and so on. This is about the yonder side of religion. But even this side of religion is pretty beyond language in some of its dimensions. If, for example, religion is what Rudolf Otto calls the experience of the numinous, it cannot be conceptualized, much less propositionalized or verbalized.

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1. *Madhyamaka-Śāstra* 1, 2; *Māṇḍūkya-Ūpaniṣad* 7.

2. See *Śūrīraka-Bhāṣya*, with *Brahma-Sūtra*, etc. Mahadeva Shastri Bakre and Wasudeva Laxman Shastri Panashikara, eds. ( 3rd ed., Bombay : Nimaya Sagar Press, 1914 ), 3, 2, 17, p. 644.



# TYPES OF THEOLOGICAL STATEMENTS

by

SANGAM LAL PANDEY

The aim of this paper is to show the lines on which Indian Philosophy can be used to constructively guide the discussions which are going on in the West over the nature, meanings and functions of religious language. It need not recapitulate the recent attack and rampage that has been carried on by different schools of linguistic analysis against religion, for, it is sufficient to point out that at present, as Dr. H. D. Lewis<sup>1</sup> says, the open texture of language is stressed and studied in every acknowledgeable circle and a proper place is kept for the language of religion in the philosophy of language. Mr. G. J. Warnock's following statement sufficiently describes the present mood of the philosophers who practise linguistic analysis :—

"If any one thing is characteristic of contemporary philosophy, it would be precisely the realisation that language has *many* uses, ethical, aesthetic, literary and indeed metaphysical uses among them. There is no tendency to say 'You must not (or cannot) say that'; there is a readiness to appraise on its merits whatever may be said and for whatever purpose, provided only that something is said and words are not used idly."<sup>2</sup>

It is this background of the spirit of search and toleration against which we venture to make some suggestions from the lessons of Indian Philosophy for the further advancement of language philosophy and religion in the sequel.

To begin with, the users of religious language in India have invariably insisted on its oddity, i. e. the characteristic which makes it the very opposite of ordinary language. In the Purāṇas

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1. *Philosophy of Religion*, H. D. Lewis, Teach Yourself Book, London, 1965, p. 104.

2. *The Revolution in Philosophy*, by A. J. Ayer et al, London, 1956, p. 125.

it is called as *Samādhi Bhāṣā*, i. e. the language of meditation. When the sage of the *Īśa' Upaniṣad* describes Brahman as that which moves and does not move, which is far as well as near, which is outside as well as inside everything he uses this very language.<sup>1</sup> The Siddhas and the Yogins have called it as *Sandhya Bhāṣā* or *Sandhyā Bhāṣā* which may be translated as twilight-language or paradoxical language. Kabir and his followers have very clearly called it as *Utanbant* or inverted speech. What is important to note in this context is the fact that this inverted speech of the saints is not an idle use of language. Rather it is a deliberate and well-cultured use of ordinary language to describe the realization of the sages. It is contrasted with ordinary language by Bhavabhūti who states that the language of the sages is fundamentally different from the language of the worldly *elite* in-so-far as words precede and perform meanings in the case of the latter while the meanings precede and perform words in the case of the former.<sup>2</sup> Obviously the inverted speech of the saints has the same syntactics as the ordinary language; only its semantics is different from that of the latter. This difference in respect of semantics entails that the level of the inverted speech is different from that of ordinary language. In other words, religious language and ordinary language do not have the same discourse, context and object.

This difference of levels can be compared with that which obtains between the level of logical paradoxes and the level of ordinary language. It points to metaphysical paradoxes which deserve to be resolved on a par with logical paradoxes. Metaphysical paradoxes reveal some insights. As Professor Price<sup>3</sup> has said, sensible, clear propositions are not enough and a new truth often breaks linguistic rules by exhibiting itself as paradox. So the metaphysical paradoxes that underlie religious language

1. Tadejati tannaijati taddūre tadvantike.

Tadantarasya sarvasya tadu sarvasyāśya lābhyate—*Īśa' Upaniṣad*, 3.

2. Laukikānām hi sādūnām vāgarthamavartate.

Rṣiṇām punarādyānām vācamartha'vibhāvāt—*Īśa' Upaniṣad*, 1, 10.

3. Vide *Clarity is not Enough*, H. H. Price, *Proceedings of the Aristotelian Society*, Supplementary Volume XIX, 1943.



are the carriers of new truths. "They are paradoxes, i. e. the attempts to say something which, in terms of ordinary language, cannot be said".<sup>1</sup> In this way, metaphysical propositions which are undoubtedly paradoxes, are not non-sense but full of sense which must be explored by the cautious use of language. In a word, *Samādhi Bhāṣā* or religious language describes a fact which otherwise beggars description.

Further, when Indian thinkers tried to interpret this language, they made a similar distinction, which is made between object-language and meta-language in contemporary symbolic logic. They discussed Vedic language in ordinary language and often maintained a peculiar sort of parallelism between Vedic language and ordinary language. Furthermore, according to them, Vedic language itself has three levels, *Samādhi Bhāṣā*, *Laukikī Bhāṣā* and *Parakīyā Bhāṣā*.<sup>2</sup> *Samādhi Bhāṣā* is the language of meditation. It is the religious language *par excellence*, *Laukikī Bhāṣā* is the analogical language. It uses analogies and allegories, parables and metaphors and the other figures of speech. The relation, for example, between the Individual Soul and the Supreme Soul is described in this language as that which obtains between two birds that are sitting on the same tree.<sup>3</sup> Again, the *Parakīyā Bhāṣā* means the symbolic language or the use of symbols for the description of spiritual reality. The *Ṛg-Veda* for example, describes a religious fact in this language when it describes an ox with four horns, three feet, two heads, seven hands and three cords.<sup>4</sup> Obviously, the ox is here a symbol which stands for sacrifice (Yajña).

These levels of religious language indicate three functions of language, denotative, analogical and symbolic. The language of meditation denotes a fact. It is the language of intuition.

1. Vide the view of John Wisdom quoted by Margaret Masterman in *British Philosophy in Mid-Century*, Ed. by C. A. Mace, London, 1957, p. 213.

2. *Samādhībhāṣā* prathamā *laukikī* ca *tathāparā*.  
*īryā* *parakīyēti śīra-bhāṣā* *tridhā* *smṛtā*. *Sambhugītā*.

3. *Ṛg Veda*, 1, 164, 20.

4. *Ṛg Veda*, 4, 58, 3.

Here is the direct encounter with reality. The Existentialist philosophers describe this very language as the existential encounter with the Scriptures. Further, analogy is the language of understanding or intellect. It is used by saints and philosophers alike to point out that which falls beyond the ken of the senses. All the arguments for the existence of God are based upon analogy, i. e. they use the language of analogy. The cosmological argument for the existence of God is its best illustration. Lastly, symbolic language is the language of imagination which creates its own tools and rules to bring out the structure of the supra-sensible reality.

Now what Indian thinkers appear to maintain is the view that all the three levels of language describe a metaphysical fact. The language of intuition, the language of intellect and the language of imagination describe, *inter-alia*, that which is supra-sensible. In other words, they are ontological in their final import. They are, in fact, pointers to extra-linguistic facts.

But, it may be alleged, this is a controversial issue. For, there are Mīmāṃsā philosophers like Jaimini, Kumārila and Prabhākara who maintain that the Veda which is the religious language *par excellence* does not describe any fact at all.<sup>1</sup> They deny, like contemporary logical Positivists and Analytical Philosophers, that religious language has no cognitive value and maintain, like Mr. Hare and others that religious language is only conative in its meaning. Śaṅkara, however, refutes the view of these philosophers and proves that the Veda is very much ontological in its character. His main argument is based upon the implications of commands and prohibitions which are the meanings of the Veda according to conativists, for, commands and prohibitions imply the existence of facts but for which they cannot be carried out.<sup>2</sup> Moreover, Śaṅkara argues, that the Veda describes the meaning which is religious *sui generis* and which, as such, is irreducible to any other meaning.<sup>3</sup> In other words, the religious

1. Mīmāṃsā Sūtra, Jaimini, I, 2, 1. Also vide the opinion of Prabhākara quoted by Śaṅkara in *Śārīrakabhāṣya*, I, 1, 4.

2. *Śārīrakabhāṣya*, I, 1, 4.

3. *Ibid.*



language describes a meaning which is basically different from logical, ethical, poetic, aesthetic, sociological and historical meanings. But this does not mean that the Veda does not refer to these meanings at all. In fact, the Veda describes many other meanings apart from the religious meaning. But its main scope is the religious meaning. This religious meaning of the Veda according to Śaṅkara, is the identity between the individual soul and the Supreme soul, i. e. *Tat Tvam Asi*. Other philosophers, however, hold that this religious meaning is God-realization or liberation from the bondage of the body or action. So it is wrong to say that religious language is non-cognitive only.

This view of Śaṅkara has been assimilated to every system of Indian Philosophy and religious language is recognised as pre-eminently cognitive in every system of Indian philosophy. But it does not mean that the other functions of religious language are little considered in Indian philosophy. The emotivists like the conativists and the cognitivists are not wanting among Indian philosophers. There are mystics like the Buddha and Kabira who lay stress upon the emotive meaning of religious language, particularly, the meanings of *So' Aham Asmi*, *Śūnyatāiva Aham* and the similar statements. They prefer silence to speech. But it must be emphasized that their silence is, more often than not, the result of a dialectic, it is the result of the Antinomies of Reason and so it is not irrational or absurd. It is a kind of language. The silence of the Buddha is his speech.<sup>1</sup> This speech is some sub-language or underground language whose intentionalities are entirely different from those of our spoken language. The language of poetry approximates this language, as both of them use the suggestive power of word (*Vyañjanāśakti*) to convey their meaning. But as this language is indescribable per definition, it is not called the religious language which is used for understanding and preaching religious truths,

Thus Indian philosophers have discussed the logic of theological statements threadbare. They have classified theological state-

1. Avacanam Buddhavacanam, *Laṅkāvatārasūtra*, ed. Bunyīn Nanjio, Kyoto, 1923, p. 143.

ments as positive statements and negative statements. Negative statements, according to them, are direct and the positive ones are indirect or oblique. The examples of negative statements are *neti neti*, Brahman is not that which is the object of speech and senses, etc. etc. Their meaning is literal (*Abhidheya*). Maṇḍana Miśra<sup>1</sup> rightly says that the Vedic Language directly or literally describes the dissolution of the whole world, as there are negative theological statements to this effect. Similarly, the idea of a Transcendent God can be conceived with the help of negative statements that are made in respect of such a God. Further more, as Śaṅkara says, every negative statement presupposes some positive statements.<sup>2</sup> So negative factual statements ultimately make a mention of some positive fact. But if it is insisted that all determination is negation, then some negative meaning will itself become ultimate and philosophy of religion will explain it as the transcendent aspect of God who is the supreme reality.

Now, positive theological statements use, by and large, the indicative power of word, (*Lakṣanā Śakti*) to convey their meaning. They have been classified as cognitive and emotive. The Indian terms for these statements are "*Tathārthavākya* ( reality-statement ), *ROCAKA VĀKA* (stimulative statement) and *BHAY-ĀNAKA VĀKYA* ( Awesome statement ).<sup>3</sup> Mīmāṃsā philosophers have meticulously investigated into the various kinds of *Rocaka Vākya*. They have found it five-fold, Viz., injunction or command of duty (*Vidhi*), prohibition (*Niṣedha*), description of various parts of duty (*Mantra*), naming the various things used in the performance of duty (*Nāmadheya*) and recommendations (*Arthavāda*).<sup>4</sup> The purāṇic thinkers and saints have described the two main types of emotive statements, the expression of joy and the expression of the dread. These types of conative and emotive statements describe the different non-cognitive functions of relig-

1. Prapañcasya pravilayaḥ śabdena pratipadyata. *Brahmasiddhi*, 4, 3.
2. *Śārirakabhāṣya*, 3, 2, 22.
3. *Śaṃbhugītā*.
4. *Arihasaṅgraha*, ed. and translated by D. V. Gokhle, Poona, 1932, p. 21.



ious language with which we are little concerned here. For our present purposes, however, it is sufficient to note that according to Indian philosophers no conative or emotive function of religious language is feasible without the belief in its cognitive function, for, commands and the like presuppose its cognitive meaning. If there be no God, if there be no knowledge of God, then the conative and emotive functions of religious language would have no force to produce commands and the like.

Now to proceed further in the investigation of cognitive functions of religious language, let us consider the levels of religious language that we have described above. They give us three divisions of cognitive statements, namely, the statement of intuition or direct encounter with reality, analogical statement or the statement of understanding and the symbolic statement or the statement of imagination. Analogical statements and symbolic statements are obviously related to the systems of Science and Art respectively. For, analogy and symbolism require an order of ideas which is supplied to them by Science and Art respectively. But the statement of intuition does not appear to have any connection with any order or system of ideas. It seems to be an isolated experience of the person who has it. But a little thinking reveals that this is not the case, for, no experience can be isolated from its fraternity. The statement of intuition is related to an historical-cum-mythological order in the same way as the analogical statement is related to a system of observations. Fortunately we find that to the above types of theological statements are added the historical-cum-mythological statements (*Itihāsa-Purāṇa-Vaśana*) by the Indian exponents of religious language. These statements may be regarded as the statements of understanding-cum-imagination. They are, on the one hand, the extension or development of the intuitive statements,<sup>1</sup> and on the other hand the presupposition and axiomatics for the very possibility of intuitive statements.<sup>2</sup> Thus, it is apparent that the intuitive stat-

1. *Mahābhārata Aśṭaparva* (Gita Press), I, 267.

2. *Purāṇam sarvaśāstrāṇām prathamam Brahmanam smṛtam.*

*Anantaram ca vakrebbhyo vedāstasya vinissṛtāḥ. Matsya-purāṇa.*

ement and historical-cum-mythological statement mutually entail each other. The meaning of intuitive statement is interpreted and verified by historical-cum-mythological statement which receives its content from the intuitive statement itself. In a sense, the intuitive statement is the *prius* of the historical-cum-mythological statement, which is, in its turn, the verifier of intuitive statement. But there is a sense in which the historical-cum-mythological statements are the *prius* of the intuitive statement. Or, *Ītiḥāsa-Purāṇa* is the *prius* of the Veda. As some intuitive truths are entailed by systems of Mathematics and Science, so religious intuition is also entailed by a historical-cum-mythological system.

At this juncture, two questions deserve our special consideration. First, what is the relation between the statement of intuition and mythology? Second, what is the relation between history and mythology, or more precisely, what is the relation between the history of religious intuitions and mythology? The classical Indian answer to both these questions is by and large, very simple and straightforward; historical description is inseparably connected with mythological statement of intuition. But this view has been recently opposed by Swāmi Dayānanda ( 1824--1883 ) who has advocated to get at the meaning of the Veda without the intermediary of the Purāṇas. He has demythologized the Veda and tried to interpret it scientifically. Sr Aravinda ( 1872-1950 ) has further developed his line of Vedicegenesis and demonstrated that the Veda describes the experiences which can be had here and now by those who follow the path of integral Yoga. The radical theology of these sa es has been recently confirmed in the demythologization theory of Rudolf Bultmann ( 1884 ),<sup>1</sup> who states that the central Kerygma of Christianity can be gained as a living experience even if the historical Jesus is separated from the Christ of Myth-

1. Vide *Jesus Christ and Mythology*, Rudolf Bultmann, Newyork, 1958. For his demythologization theory see shorter writings by Rudolf Bultmann, *Existence and Faith* ed. Shubert Ogden. The lib:rar Collens, 1964, pp. 19-20.



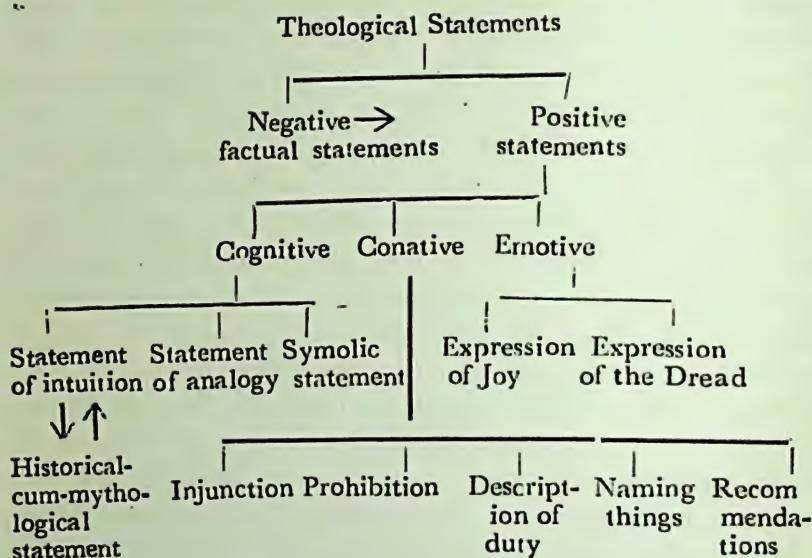
ology. Furthermore, he tries to demythologize the New Testament and describe God non-mythologically. He advocates that almost everything in the New Testament excepting the Central Kerygma, can be understood as the descriptions of the modes of personal existence. In terms of Indian Philosophy his demythologization means that the teaching of *Tat tvan asi* can be realised in one's own life without any reference to mythology or Purāṇas. So what Bultmann says, Indian Philosophers have been saying for over a millenium, that is, self-realization can be achieved by either of the two ways, the way of intuition ( Śruti ) and the way of mythology ( Purāṇa ). The former is the path of knowledge and the latter is the path of Bhakti. The path of knowledge is the path of Jesus and the path of Bhakti is the path of Paul. Thus what Bultmann aims at, is not the elimination of all myths but the elimination of those mythologies that have been added to the religion of Jesus by Paul and his followers. Like his Indian predecessors, Swāmī Dayānanda and Śrī Aravinda he believes in the central kerygma and rejects the mythologies that have grown around it. His theology is exactly the same as the Vedic enegesis of Swāmī Dayānanda and Śrī Aravinda, viz. it is in terms of personal experiences and is free from mythologies. But all of them believe that God descends to man and speaks to him. So they in the myth of revelation. Now the question arises—'Is this myth an isolated phenomenon?' The traditional Indian answer to this question is that no myth can be separated from its fraternity and hence the tacit acceptance of any one myth implies the whole system of mythology. So, as the attempts of Swāmī Dayānanda and Śrī Aravinda to free the Veda from the Purāṇas have failed because of the inherent contradictions underlying them, the demythologization of the New Testament made by Rudolf Bultmann, is too bound to fail because of the same contradictions. The problem is not to reduce the number of myths, but to have myths or no myth at all. Therefore, let us examine the view whether total de-mythologization, the complete elimination of all myths is possible. If a complete separation of historical Jesus from the mythical Christ is made, then no body can live the historical Jesus here and have the instructions or

Gospels from God directly, for Jesus receiving the teaching of God is a Myth as simple as any other myth. In fact, the entire divine personality of Jesus is a myth irrespective of the fact whether we call it historical or mythological. The religious meaning is numious (*Rahasya*) and as such it is inalienably connected with myth. Accordingly, religious language is inseparably bound with mythmaking and it is impossible to separate the husk of mythology from the kernel of religion. So when we take a wider meaning of myth and demythologization, then it is impossible to live like Jesus and have the demythologization of the New Testament. As a matter of fact no religious experience is possible without myth, no existential encounter with the Gospels is possible without myth-making, and no religious language can openly be used without mythology. Religious language is thus irredeemably connected with mythology. If it is not so, then the difference between the Buddha and Jesus, between the Buddha and Mohammad would obliterate and with this would go away the difference of all religious denominations. So practising demythologization and vindicating the possibility of going to the Trinity through Christ and Christ alone is a contradiction-in-terms. The authentic practitioner of demythologization would not be a Christian, a Jew, a Buddhist, a Muslim, a Hindu or a follower of any other religion. He would be an *arhat* or *pratyeka buddha* by himself and would have neither a teacher nor a disciple, would neither initiate anyone nor be initiated by anyone, for, all initiation is a patent myth. Evidently, therefore, every historical statement of religious experience is connected with mythology. The Indian Theory of admixture of history and mythology correctly designates this religious truth. In a word, the statement of intuition and the historical-cum-mythological statements, mutually entail each other. There is no watershed between them.

Now we have come to a stage at which we may put all the types of theological statements in a tabular form:



## TABLE OF THEOLOGICAL STATEMENTS



N. B. :-The arrow in this table means entailment. For example the arrow between negative factual statement and positive statement means that the former entails the latter.

This Table may be used to discover all the functions and meanings of religious language and to understand the genuine nature of religion and its relation with psychology, ethics, liturgy, science, aesthetics, history and mythology. It gives a model of statements which may be found useful in the domain of ordinary language too. It helps us successfully analyze those meanings which ordinary language goes on tautously investigating *ad infinitum*.

A little more consideration over the Table of theological statements will reveal that it contains three varieties of statements logical, deontological and psychological. Negative factual statements and positive cognitive statements are logical in the true sense of the word. Their truth-value can be verified. Further, conative statements are deontological and the emotive ones are psychological. The whole logic of religious language is, thus,

highly complicated and interesting. When studied systematically it may exercise a tremendous influence upon the present course of the logic of ordinary language. A fact of much importance in this context is the methodology of religion which limits empiricism and sets up an alternative to it. The users of religious language openly declare that they are lovers of indirect knowledge and haters of sense-experience.<sup>1</sup> They turn down the appeal to sense experience as insignificant and propose an appeal to intuitive experience. But, curiously enough, they do admit that their intuitive experience can be justified and recovered by logic.<sup>2</sup> In this way, they have their own logic of theology which conflicts from A to Z with the logic of natural science. Naturally therefore, when a man is dissatisfied with natural science, he turns to the logic of theology for new light, new logic and new life. Herein lies the perennial value of religious language.

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1. Parokṣa-priyā vai devāḥ, pratyakṣa-dviṣaḥ.

2. *Manusmṛiti*, XII, 106.



# **The Structure of Religious Languages**

*By*

N. S. S. RAMAN

## **I**

The title I am giving to this humble paper may sound somewhat perplexing, because I am here speaking of 'religious languages' rather of a 'religious language'. It is my view that the expression of, and response to religious experience is not manifested always, and perhaps seldom, in the logical or propositional form. But under the influence of the Anglo-Saxon tradition of religious philosophy, we have got accustomed to speak of a 'logic of religion' or 'language of religious discourse' to characterise the logical or linguistic analysis of the propositions in which theological arguments are expressed. For example, the scholastic arguments for the existence of God (more particularly the instance of Anselm's celebrated essay 'Why the atheist is a fool') belong to this tradition. The commentators on religious texts have also been scrupulously 'logical' in their approach to religious experience. Professors of philosophy and theology are perpetrators of this scholastic tradition. The climax of the academic tradition of philosophy of religion is represented to-day by the so-called linguistic analyst, who makes it his function to subject to a close analytical scrutiny, some common statements on God, soul and other topics concerning religious belief.

But here there is a divergence of opinion among the Anglo-Saxon thinkers. Logical positivists (e.g. A. J. Ayer) following on Wittgenstein dismissed religious statements as pseudo-propositions falling into the same class as metaphysical statements. And like ethical statements, religious statements were also emotive having no meaning. This prompted Gilbert Ryle to make his famous remark that "in our half

century, philosophy and theology have not been on speaking terms'<sup>1</sup>. However, a later phase of logical positivism has compromised with theology on certain points. But they are still indifferent to a theological *Weltanschauung*, though they no longer regard theological statements as being devoid of significance. That is why they talk of 'the logic of religion' and subject 'religious language' to a close analytical scrutiny (as they would subject ordinary-language statements also to such scrutiny).<sup>2</sup>

But the logical positivist as well as the logical analyst are using 'language' in a somewhat narrow sense. They would grant the status of language to mathematical expressions, but not to language of art. (Wittgenstein does use the analogy of music and the musical score very often.) Wittgenstein seems to be thinking of language in a narrow propositional sense, when he says for example that "Philosophy is a battle against the bewitchment of our intelligence by means of language". (Philosophical Investigations, 109). Earlier however, Wittgenstein had curtailed the function of language, which is to 'mirror' or 'picture' reality (the metaphors are Wittgenstein's). He had declared in the *Tractatus*: "To give the essence of a proposition means to give the essence of all description, and thus the essence of the world", (5.4711) and "*The limits of my language mean the limits of my world*", (5.6) and again "*The totality of propositions is language*" (4.001). The logician does not want the horizons of language to be widened. In particular, the Anglo-Saxon logical analyst does not want to be liberated from what Nietzsche called 'the prison-house of language'<sup>3</sup>. We cannot throw off the rational

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1. Quoted by Basil Mitchell, *Faith and Logic*, Introduction, p. 2, London, 1950.
  2. On this point see Basil Mitchell, *Op. cit.* pp. 2-6.
  3. Nietzsche : *Gesammelte Werke* (Munich Edition, Munich, 1926-29), Vol. XIX, p. 34. See also Erich Heller's essay 'Ludwig Wittgenstein : Unphilosophical Notes' in the volume *New Essays on Religious Language*, Ed. by Dallas M. High, New York, 1969.



scheme which binds our interpretation of all modes of communication including the 'religious'. The supremacy of the logical, of the prosaic should be challenged. One can break out of the prison-house only if man is liberated from the compulsions of faith, of philosophy and dogma. This liberation is achieved according to Nietzsche in the death of God.

## II

A serious and exhaustive study of symbolism at various levels of the aesthetic and the religious has already been made by writers like E. Cassirer<sup>1</sup>, W. M. Urban<sup>2</sup> and S. Langer<sup>3</sup>. Their method involves mapping out the entire range of aesthetic symbolism from poetry, plastic arts, drama, myth etc., and it would include even the symbolism of science, religion and metaphysics. Karl Jaspers<sup>4</sup> throughout his works also deals with the problem of symbolism in his doctrine of ciphers. The ciphers are essentially symbols standing for the transcendental; they are spontaneous and arise only in an authentically existential situation, which armchair philosophy can only seek to analyse and explain inadequately. Immanuel Kant in his *Critique of Judgement* had also spoken of ciphers as the beautiful language through which Nature 'speaks to us'.<sup>5</sup> The emotive content of ciphers cannot of course be isolated from their over-all meaning, which only an authentic being can grasp. Thus Jaspers deals with 'ciphers' of transcendence (which he contrasts with the 'signa' of existence) at various levels of man's intellectual and emotional activity—Philosophy, Art, Religion.

For a serious study of religious language, we have to take into account the entire range of religious symbolism as expressed through the various religious texts, through forms

1. in *Philosophie der Symbolischen Formen*, 2 Vols. Darmstadt, 1956.
2. in *Language and Reality*, London, 1939.
3. in *Feeling and Form*, London, 1953.
4. in *Philosophie*, Vol. III, pp. 129ff. (Berlin/Heidelberg, 1956).
5. *Critique of Judgement*, 42.

of literature (e.g. dialogue, drama, poetry, mythology, aphorisms etc.) through plastic arts and music. It would be necessary to structuralize the entire range of symbolism. The criteria for such 'structuring' would not only be the linguistic meaning and logical relationship, but also their emotional content. Nicolai Hartmann has given us the procedure for stratification in the realm of ethics and metaphysics.<sup>1</sup> What he calls 'strength', 'height' and 'depth' in the stratification of values can be applied to the ordering of the religious symbols. It is difficult of course to structurize religious symbols according to their emotional content, or according to their 'depth'. It requires what Hartmann would characterize as '*Wertsicht*' or an evaluative perceptivity to penetrate into the depth of the emotional meaning. This perspective is not unlike that of literary appreciation and criticism. Understanding the full significance and depth of the various orders of symbolism is in fact somewhat similar to what Plato would call '*epekeina tes ousias*'<sup>2</sup>, i.e. going beyond the logical and metaphysical world of the intelligible to the 'meta-noetic', i.e. going beyond the mere world of metaphysical knowledge to the non-sensory inner core to which Eduard Spranger referred as the '*unsinnlich Innere*' somewhat similar to the Greek conception of '*prosopon*' the inner countenance of being. Thus the procedure for the structurizing of religious language is neither logical nor ontological nor even axiological but hermeneutic.

It therefore, appears to me to be somewhat frivolous merely to indulge in 'logical analysis' of religious language as the Anglo-Saxons have done. To talk of 'logic of religious language' is as absurd as talking of 'logic of poetry'. Besides it would be doing rank injustice to religion if we reduce it to a 'theology'. In my opinion, the Anglo-Saxon tendency to analyse religious language suffers from this confusion of religion with 'theology'. The procedure for ordering religious

1. Refer in particular to his *Ästhetik*, Berlin, 1953. See also his *Aufbau der realen Welt*, Berlin, 1940.

2. *The Republic*, 509 b.



language is no doubt a priori, by which the intellect tries to grasp the inner meaning and coherence of subject-matter, but this can be supplemented by an a posteriori procedure of descriptive understanding and interpretation. But to ignore the inner core of religious experience while considering religious language as expressed in theological argumentation is to present only one side of the picture.

# **The Nature of the Religious Language**

*By*

Dr. (Mrs.) LAKSHMI SAXENA

## **Statement of the Problem :**

Philosophy in the 20th century took a new turn when it brought into disrepute the metaphysician by declaring that most of the problems which it dealt with were linguistic problems in disguise. The target was the Idealistic School which spoke about the Absolute, Ultimate Reality, Being and essences and it appeared that the greater the obscurity in the language employed the profounder ought to be the thought underlying it. The new group which opposed the use of such language was known as the Vienna School. Its adherents settled down to the important task of a criticism of the philosophical language and eliminated most of the traditional problems relating to God, Soul and Immortality by declaring them to be Pseudo Problems. The Principle which they accepted as the touchstone of the meaningful was the Verification Principle and verification had reference to Sense-experience. The only exception for them was in regard to logical and mathematical propositions because they were tautologies.

It was obvious that though the insight of these thinkers was fairly right within the restricted sphere for which it was formulated it could not be fruitful if stretched beyond those limits. If rigorously adhered to as was done by some of the ardent proponents of the school, it was definite it would have to exclude much of the conversations, not to say the most interesting part of the conversations of civilised human beings.<sup>1</sup>

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1. Geddes Mac Gregor, Introduction to Religious Philosophy, 1968, p. 322.



Some of the earlier exponents of the doctrine however, like Wittgenstein saw the consequences from the very commencement and so did not fall into its snare. But still to the inebriated few whatever could not satisfy the criterion of verifiability was not intelligible and so could not be the subject of any fruitful discussion. A new school sprang up in ethics known as New-Subjectivism with many variations and the pattern could very conveniently be extended to the sphere of the aesthetic and religious as well.

Whatever be our attitude towards the New School one thing was clear namely that, it realized the intimate relationship existing between language and facts. What it did not realize was the truth that not all facts were of the same kind and so no single language could do justice to them. In other words, since sense bound thought was not the only form of cognitive experience (for besides the cognitive there were other forms of experiences<sup>1</sup>), it was clear that a language intimately adapted to its requirements could not satisfy the requirements of other experiences. The fundamental insight was fairly right but on account of its very restricted validity and on account of the fact that it was stretched beyond its limits the result was a doctrine which was more stifling than illuminating.

### **Limits of Ordinary Language :**

Each one of us is aware of the fact that ordinary language fails to communicate our intimate experiences of life—our joys, griefs and despair. Often we are mute for want of expression and sometimes we just do not wish to express ourselves in words. We communicate most naturally and

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1. Students of metaphysics are conversant with the views of philosophers on the subject. K. C. Bhattacharya has spoken of 4 forms of thought, empirical; pure; psychic and transcendental. Bradley likewise speaks of an onversation of thought in a Supra-relational immediate experience, Bergson however goes to present a view which is staggering at first sight that empirical thought having pragmatic orientation is not a cognitive faculty by virtue of which reality can be intuited.

most effectively by a touch, or a gesture or even a tear in our eyes. What word however carefully chosen could be more expressive than that.

Again, the gifted amongst us—those charged with a fiery imagination and a sensitivity for the aesthetic, have realized the inadequacy of ordinary speech, with its emphasis on the 'definite', to convey their intuitions. In other forms of Art too where language is not the medium colours and sound vibrations convey equally well what the artist wished to convey more effectively than words. It is a question of charging ones medium—whether it be word, colour or sound vibrations, with significance which has its source in the subjective being of man more than the objective world he inhabits<sup>1</sup>. Where 'words' are the medium of communication the creative imagination of the poet, the novelist or the dramatist charges very simple words with an extraordinary suggestivity. The greater the artist the greater his dexterity in the use of words but one must remember that those words shall have an appeal only for those who have a sensitivity capable of responding to the suggestivity of the words employed.

### **The Religious Commitment :**

What is true of the aesthetic is true of the moral language and is in an infinitely greater measure true of the religious language also. To all outward appearances the language of moral discourse and the religious discourse may not differ from the ordinary, but in its suggestiveness and appeal it touches a level which is far removed from the ordinary. That is why in religious discourse we find a continual employment of analogies, stories and parables which abound in a suggestivity unique of its kind and one which cannot be made intelligible with reference to the ordinary experiences of life. For in all kinds of religious experiences though the language used may be very ordinary there is a sense of commitment which endows it with an altogether new dimen-

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1. The entire Aesthetics inspired by Kant amply substantiates our contention.



sion. That is why for those who are not initiated into that kind of life the same words convey absolutely nothing.

We have all seen the spectacle of thousands of people going to the temple or the church but when they come out of it they resume their normal lives just what they were and their so called religious life runs tangent to their normal life.<sup>1</sup>

But to the initiated few the language of the rituals is itself charged with a message from the above. It is the medium in and through which they establish a contact with the Divine. Even such a simple thing like the lighting of a candle or the burning of an incense becomes meaningful. For like switching on the light the act becomes an instrument wherewith a contact with the divine is immediately established. With increase in devotion the devotee begins to receive messages from the divine and is able to decipher what it means for him.

The language of the rituals, we repeat, has significance only for the initiated and initiation means some kind of a commitment which to the non-initiated is devoid of value. But this commitment which is deeper than the moral commitment does not stop short at the state of rituals. Soon this stage is outgrown for it has ceased to be useful. One begins to feel that these hinder the communion with the divine.

The second stage develops into the form of a number of relationships with the divine—each according to the taste and the temperament of the devotee. Hindu religion speaks of 'Navadhā bhakti' or the nine forms under which God is worshipped. The lord appears to some as a child, or companion or parent and to a few even as the beloved. The

1. Kierkegaard has in a very illuminating manner brought out the significance of Faith which is higher than Reason in his book "Fear and Trembling." The whole book centres around unravelling the deeper significance of "Sacrifice" which Abraham is called upon to make and what from the ethical point of view could be described as "Killing." It is this 'Faith' which sustains Abraham and it is this which makes his philosophy a religious one.

language of the devotee resembles in its outward form the ordinary language of love. But deep within the imperceptible sense of commitment endows it with a singular tone—the like of which is not to be encountered in the life of the ordinary man. The ordinary man lives a surface life. The consciousness which activates him is the divisive consciousness which cannot speak the language of love.

The language of love begins with a life of dedication to the object of one's love. By no other desire is such a man swayed except the one desire to do something for one's beloved in thought, word, and deed. Like the 'flame' he is seized with an all-consuming passion and his whole life is a ceaseless act of surrender and a giving away at the altar of the divine.

Finally religions speak of a still higher dimension of the religious experience. It is one in which the two have coalesced to exist in a state of 'atonement'. The dividing line between the 'I' and the 'Thou' is no longer seen. The devotee doesn't retain even that much of itself to call itself the 'I'. In such a state the devotee transcends the necessity of speech altogether for 'Stillness' is more dynamic and expressive than words. Of this state of Felicity the mystic sometimes speaks—but of which he can only speak when he has been through the experience, i.e. when experience is over. As the poet says of Poetry that it is an emotion recollected in tranquility so of the religious language at this stage one can say it conveys experience recollected in tranquility.

From the above it must be clear that religions are multi-dimensional and so need multidimensional language to do justice to the diversity of its contents. In the early stages of religious development symbols are used and their use is useful. These prove doubly useful. They help us in switching off all thoughts of the earthly life which we live ordinarily and it enables us to link ourselves with the fontal source within and above ourselves. Let us remember once again all this is possible only for the dedicated



few. It should also be remembered that these symbols have got to be continually vitalized by the live touch of authentic experiences otherwise they become stale and inefficacious. Again one set of symbols may not satisfy all, so these have got to be adjusted according to the needs and requirements of the developing soul. In the higher stages of the religious development these cease to be useful and it is to draw our attention to this fact that the great saint Vivekananda said. 'It is good to be born in a church but it is bad to die there'. By 'church' in the present context Vivekananda means religion at the level of rituals. So if we have to be true to our religious aspiration we have to rise above that level. They have a preparatory value and can be likened to the K. G. class in a primary School.

In the second stage religious consciousness extricates itself from the complexity of symbols and creeds and owns and develops the language of love. It is a slow but dedicated process directed toward an encounter with the Divine. We continue to receive intimations of its Presence. Even these send the soul in raptures and when finally it is face to face with the Divine it becomes speechless. For what words can communicate the splendour of a Reality which is more luminous than the luminosity of a thousand suns 'bursting forth all at once in the heavens'. Even that image would hardly approach the splendour of the mighty Lord.<sup>1</sup> Of this form the Lord says to Arjuna it cannot be seen by anyone else than you, either through the study of Vedas or of rituals or again through gifts, sacrifices, or austere penances.<sup>2</sup> Again, says the Lord to Arjuna, of his four armed form—gentler than the first one, 'This form of Mine (with four arms) which you have seen is exceedingly difficult to perceive. Even the gods are always eager to behold this form'.<sup>3</sup> Again speaking of its nature, He says, 'Neither by study of Vedas nor by penance, nor by charity nor by ritual can I be seen in this form (with four arms) as

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1. B. Gītā, Ch. XI, 12.

2. B. Gītā, Ch. XI, 48.

3. B. Gītā, Ch. XI, 52,

you have seen me'. 'Through single minded devotion however, I can be seen in this form (with four arms) and known in essence and even entered into, O valiant Arjuna'.

'Arjuna, he who works for my sake, depends on Me, is devoted to Me, has no attachment, and is free from malice toward all beings, reaches Me'.<sup>1</sup>

From the above it must be clear that for an encounter with the Divine the entire personality of the devotee has to undergo a radical transformation. And the entire process of transformation is so intricate and subtle that it is incapable of being expressed through the medium of a language developed essentially to suit the conveniences of our pragmatic life. As the personality of the religious grows from within mellow and matures, so words also mellow from within and assume a 'hue' which is not discernible to the ordinary eye.

**Is it cognitive ? a 'Yes' and a 'No' both :**

Again, since religious experience itself is not uni-dimensional One language cannot be expected to do justice to it. The question pertinent at this stage is, can we call such a language cognitive ? The answer in my opinion would be both a 'Yes' and a 'no'. It could be called cognitive in the sense that it speaks of a Reality which is 'seen' by the aspirant. But because the word 'cognitive' ordinarily stands for a form of consciousness distinguishable from the affective and the volitional, religious experience which is neither simply cognitive nor purely affective, but a unique amalgm of the two cannot be called cognitive in the ordinary use of the term. And for the same reason religious language is not simply communicative. In short it does not simply speak of 'facts' existing within or independently of the individual consciousness. It conveys the person's deepest involvement with the phenomena it is not only wishing to decipher but something with which it is wanting to establish a meaningful dialogue. A 'commitment' it truly is and a commitment of the deepest kind. That

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J. B. Gita, Ch. XI, 52, 55.



word is very suggestive, in my opinion, and therefore nothing which is purely objective can do justice to it neither language nor facts.

Finally I should like to say that the question of the nature of religious experience and language is a very difficult one. We hardly possess the requisite authority to effectively deal with it. We can only speak on the subject on the basis of the utterances of seers and saints who have held the light and also on the basis of the evidence supplied to us by men and women around us whom we call aspirants or the seekers of the light. All that we can say is that the religious language is charged with a wonderful suggestivity and is capable of eliciting response only in those who possess the required sensitivity for the spiritual. Further that its closest analogue can be had in the esthetic and the moral.

## Religious Languages

*By*

AVTAR SINGH

A very vital area of human experience and activity is known as religion. People are generally born "in" a certain religious tradition and fall back upon it for a wide variety of "information" and guiding "norms", though this may be in differing degrees in the different cultures. It is therefore, natural and necessary for the philosophers to exhibit interest in the language of religious information and ideals.

It may be helpful if we begin with the observation that religious language may not present any problem to a large majority of people, and consequently, any impact of a theoretical discussion of the problems of religious language may prove to be restricted in terms of application and utility. In the normal empirical world religious language attracts attention for a pragmatic purpose. One of the most common paradigm of this situation arises in case of a dialogue. If, for the sake of convenience only, we may call a religious person belonging to one religious tradition as A, and religious person belonging to another religious tradition as B, the dialogue could be between A and A, A and B, and, B and B. These groups may further include  $A^1$  and  $A^{100}$  if the two have identical religious consciousness. This identity of consciousness belonging to another religious tradition in the dialogue may be possible if the two share the same meaning content of the language symbols used by them—which, empirically speaking, may sometimes be fairly difficult. The fact that in life there may be  $A^1$  to  $A^{100}$  or more will show possibilities of some complications in a religious dialogue. Even particular propositions, much less general religious propositions, may or may not convey the identical meanings to the two parties to a dialogue. We should, therefore, take note of the fact that if the



particular propositions present the above stated difficulty, any hasty generalisations as to the nature of principles in all the religious traditions may be anti-empirical and perhaps sometimes too a-priori to be true in experience. Secondly, a dialogue may require a clear specification of the problem or subject matter, the way or method suited to the problem for reaching the solution, and some agreement on the meaning of the proposition. "This religious proposition or statement is true". The importance of the last will become clearer from what I am going to say now. I work in the Department where each religious tradition has been allotted a block and the front portion of Hinduism, Buddhism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism carry a line from the scripture of each tradition. All the quotations hold up 'Truth' as the ultimate value. The one housing Hindu Studies, however, keeps us reminding that "Truth is one, Sages call it by many names". This may perhaps mean that *different* 'truth statements' in a dialogue are merely a reflection of a difference in the religious language. One could, perhaps, hope that if these truth-propositions were to be reduced to a mutually agreed identical language symbols, the difference in the truth-propositions found in different religious traditions would only be indicative of a different paraphrasing in one's language possibly due to a process of cultural conditioning. The differences are, therefore, merely verbal and not material. However, someone may point out at this stage that sages operating within the identical language-symbol structure have verbalised different expressions of truth. These differences within the same religious tradition seem to contradict our earlier view that the differences are merely verbal. Looking for a possible test here I may refer to a hymn of Guru Nanak where he says that 'Truth is higher than everything else but practised truth is higher still'. This has been stressed by him in many religious dialogues. Practice-in this special meaning—may therefore constitute the test of truth-propositions and truth-beliefs. It is perhaps this criterion to which Socrates refers in his dictum 'Knowledge is virtue'. The practice

may of course be viewed from an evolutionary perspective in relation to the finite individual. Setting up of practice as a test in a dialogue, may be objected to as a reference to the result. The whole series of objections against various forms of pragmatism and instrumentalism may readily come to our mind. But then perhaps it is too early in this paper to push the argument so far and get involved in working out an elaborate structure of metaphysical assumptions. My primary purpose for referring to the Vedic quotation was to direct our attention to an assertion that truth in the ultimate sense is one, the difference being only a matter of difference in expression or communication or just another name. An identity of experience is assumed here.

We may now proceed with the problem of religious language from another but allied perspective. It has often occurred to me that some of the difficulties encountered in an analysis of the religious language cannot be completely divorced from the contents of its religious beliefs. This may partly explain absence of, or significant difference of the nature of, the problems of religious language in various religious traditions. For example, the relative absence or presence of the mythology in different religious traditions may necessitate different approaches to the understanding and analysis of the religious language in the relevant religious traditions. It may be undeniable that most of the analyses of the religious language attempted in the West are based on the metaphysical assumptions or assertions of a particular religious tradition. A sharp division between the world of the sinful man and the transcendent Kingdom of God has sustained the young believers from their early childhood and religious education to their later philosophical adulthood. One is, therefore, not very surprised when he finds some of the great scholars or philosophers of the analysis schools working hard to find *meaning* in religious language but invariably coming up against the hard and fast chasm between indicative language of this world and trans-human reality of God—both theistic as well as Impersonal Absolute.



In fact the psyche and the culture which has sustained them or what constitute their self-makes it possible for them to get out of the difficulty. While they are anxious to order their religious belief into a systematic theory of language, they are almost invariably frustrated in their attempts. This has also given rise to fear in some minds and rejection of the very attempt to analyse the religious language. In this connection a scholar has remarked that "the investigation of the language of religion, though it has played an intermittent background music to the substantive theological work of the last quarter-century, has never been fully accented by theologians, or overcome the suspicion that it was an interloper in religious studies and a dangerous one at that". He further refers to another article which "implied that on philosophy's terms verificationism had settled the issue of the possibility of meaningful talk about God, and settled it negatively"<sup>1</sup>. What is forgotten here is the fact that when a certain method of analysis is founded on certain assumptions. The conclusions of the analysis largely are an unfolding of its assumptions. In a way, the analysis is merely a restatement of the assumption itself. This then seems to move in a circle even when someone may have the illusion of having gone a long distance. A theory of religious language which instead of explicating the meaning and significance of the religious phenomenon ends up by pronouncing the inadequacy of the phenomenon itself—in terms of the assumptions and methodology of the analysis is obviously either wrongly based or improperly used. Our submission here is that most of the theories of the religious language based on the religious beliefs of the Christians will tend to founder on the hard stone of verificationism modelled after the methodology of modern science.

However, it may be conceded that it is not enough to say that difficulties involved in the analysis of the empirical language geared for the Christian belief, are not the universal

1. James Wm. McClendon, Jr. and James M. Smith, "Ian Ramsay's Model of Religious Language. A qualified Appreciation", *Journal of the American Academy of Religion*, September, 1973.

difficulties. It may be necessary to demonstrate how these difficulties are not considered relevant in the "non-Christian" religious language. And here a few departures may be necessary to view the problems in a different perspective. Religious language, it may be submitted, does not always involve a trans-human reference. A fairly large number of religious statements are understood and followed by a large number of members of a certain religious tradition. In cases of very closely-knit religious groups and traditions ambiguity in religious language is far less and insignificant. It will be conceded that a fairly large number of religious propositions do not need any analysis in such cases. These propositions may be very easily verified in terms of the requirements of the religious traditions concerned.

In case of certain other religious statements, with in a certain religious tradition, there may arise some ambiguity. Possibility of more than one interpretation need not, by itself, be a necessary ground for the conclusion that the statement is meaningless. In fact certain rules of interpretation may be commonly agreed upon and a solution be sought in terms of these agreements. Almost all the religious traditions have witnessed or maintained a tradition of consulting the more knowledgeable person or persons to ascertain the correct or the intended meanings. A difference in interpretation in itself is not a sufficient argument against the validity of this method. The fact that members of various religious traditions have found such an approach satisfactory points to the fruitfulness of such a method. A question may be raised here as to the ground for the individual views in case of each interpretation. What are the bases for each interpreter in putting forth a particular suggestion of the intended meanings. Is it his subjective arbitrary view without any objective reference? It may be helpful to add here that the word objective or objectivity may be used in two senses. It may be used to refer to the view which is not clouded by any subjective emotional prejudices. In this sense it may also be described as rational, meaning thereby guided by reason in man. Its



validity, however, may not be so discernible to the people outside the concerned religious tradition. But this, by itself, is neither an argument nor a proof against the objectivity of mutually agreed view of the intended meaning of the hypothetical religious statement under the present discussion. It may be useful to recall here the view of Walter Kaufmann who holds that religious utterances are basically ambiguous, and there can be no clear or uniform or specific meaning in them. According to him, "many religious propositions, including almost all statements about God, are not reducible to any one meaning but (are) essentially ambiguous"<sup>1</sup>. One of the conclusions derived from this premise is that "a religious proposition may mean anything to anybody, and this characteristic is part of its essence. No uniformly intelligible reference to objective religious reality can therefore be claimed for religious statements". While this ambiguity is being extended to individual statements and therefore viewed in the subjective perspective the difficulty in agreeing to a mutually understandable and acceptable meaning can be overcome to a fairly good degree if the hypothetical ambiguity is sought to be understood and clarified in meaning in the context of the religious tradition to which the religious statement under discussion belongs. The fact that the meanings are arrived at by the members as a whole or in a group will ensure the objectivity of the meaning and also reflect inter-subjectivity. The fact that the views of those who know more or have been specially trained for arriving at the solution of the problems in this field will naturally carry more weight or have the probability of carrying conviction is a practice prevalent in other areas of human knowledge and research, and therefore can neither be objected nor denied to the area of religious language. The method of resolving ambiguities in the religious language, however, will be fruitful if we view the problems in the context of the individual religious tradition.

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1. Walter A. Kaufmann, *Critique of Religion and Philosophy*, ( New York : Harper Row, 1958 ), p. 247.

Any satisfactory theory of religious language should also provide a solution to the presence of myths in the religious traditions. Rudolf Bultmann has developed a theory of meaning taking mythology as the root of religious language. It may be necessary to remind ourselves that he is directly concerned with the mythology of the New Testament. It is generally felt that religious mythology in the literature or scripture need to be re-interpreted in the light of modern scientific discoveries and rejections. One may, therefore, be sympathetic to Bultmann's programme for "demythologising" the New Testament. An explanation of the myths has also been an engagement of the sociologist and anthropologist. It is said that "myth must be restated in terms that will speak to human existence as it is lived out today." It may, however, be worthwhile to remember that even the restated form of the myth may be seen as devoid of meaning if and when it is divorced from its anchorage in a particular religious tradition. It may also be added that mythology is not the root of all religious language in all the religious traditions.

An interesting discussion in respect of the religious language has often been centred around the question whether religious statements are cognitive or not. The word cognitive is an adjective of the noun cognition, which means "the process of knowing, knowledge or the capacity for it; also a product of this process, as a perception or notion." It may, therefore, be suggested that perhaps it may be more meaningful if we use the word cognition or cognitive in respect of person and his experience. It is not the quality of a statement but a statement about his experience, or more appropriately, a statement of analysis of personal experience. An over-simplified analysis—useful in some contexts, perhaps—may lead us to the wall when stretched beyond its primary objective of attempting an analysis of human experience. The division of cognitive, affective and conative is not *a statement of fact* but attempted analysis of human experience. While such an analysis may not be objected to, it is imperative for us to remember that these are merely abstractions and do not represent any final and total divisions. It is pointed out to us by a Scholar that, "It is not, of course, wrong to attempt an analysis of experience, to



distinguish (for example) sensation, reflection, volition, feeling and intuition; the error lies in supposing that in so doing we are considering activities which are different in principle and can be separated from one another finally and absolutely. They are the products of analysis, lifeless abstractions which (like all such) call out to be joined to the concrete whole to which they belong and whence they derive their nature. He further reminds us that "All abstract and incomplete experience is a modification of what is complete, individual and concrete, and to this it must be referred if we are to ascertain its character."<sup>1</sup>

When we apply this passage to our present discussion and also keep in mind what we have said earlier, it may be seen that we have underlined two submissions. First, that "cognitive" is not the quality of the statements but of experience, and second, experience, in its anchorage in a person or persons, factually speaking, refers to his whole self and not to cognitive, affective and conative aspects. The religious statements, therefore, may be communication of a person or persons to a person or persons. They are, thus, not devoid of information giving content in an actual or concrete situation. Any view contrary to this may perhaps be unempirical and verifiable only in an analysis.

Someone may, at this stage, point out that we have overlooked the whole historical discussion on the subject. We may even be accused of being ignorant of the issues raised by theoreticians in this regard. Our submission is that we have deliberately skirted around the blind wall and sought to suggest another possibility of looking at the problem and of course we can merely suggest the barest outlines in a brief paper as this. We may now direct our attention to a specific aspect of religious experience, loosely known as mystic, and attempt to see how it is communicated through a language system.

Every religion directs the attention of its "followers" towards the apex of its quest or realization. An effort is made for a relation-in-experience and the experience is described through various expressions such as communion, union, or

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1. M. Oakshott, *Experience and Its Modes*, (Cambridge : At the University Press, 1966), pp. 10-11.

emergence, which of course depends on the particular view of the apex held or accented by the members of the religious tradition. It may be needless to remind ourselves—as it is too obvious—that in the context of each religious tradition the nature of apex is accented as “given” in the experience of its prophets or founders. However, religious traditions differ in positing the possibility of every “follower” experiencing the apex himself or accenting it on the authority of the religious leader, or accent a combination of both the possibilities. We now examine the notion of the experience of the apex and the problem of the communication of this experience in religious language. This experience is very often described as mystic experience. Many scholars have analysed the mystic experience and listed many characteristics of the experience claimed to be mystic.<sup>1</sup> We are, at the present moment, concerned with the statement that the apex-experience, described to be mystical, is ineffable and unutterable. This aspect of the experience is stressed in many religious traditions. It may, however, be helpful to remember that ineffable and unutterable does not mean that the apex is beyond human experience. Second, the difficulty is with respect to both the speaker as well as the hearer,<sup>2</sup> although the words ineffable and unutterable seem to emphasise the predicament of the speaker. It has often been suggested that the ineffability is due to the uniqueness of the experience and this difficulty is further compounded by the fact

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1. Nils Bjorn Kvastad cites the Lists of William James, D. T. Suzuki and W. T. Stace. He, however, does not appear to have mentioned Evelyn Underhill's disagreement with William James. See, Nils Bjorn Kvastad, *Philosophical Problems of Mysticism*, *International Philosophical Quarterly*, June, 1973, p. 192.

2. Of course there will be no difficulty if both had the experience. Similarly there will be no difficulty for the hearer if he already had the experience which is being communicated by the speaker. It is not necessary to agree with the view of Stace that ineffability is caused by some radical defect or incapacity of the human understanding or intellect to cope with the experience, even though such a view may be based in the belief structure of any one religious tradition. The validity of such a view may of course be found within that tradition.



that "no language has been developed for that purpose."<sup>1</sup> But this difficulty is overcome in two ways. Some religious traditions overcome this situation by resorting to the use of sacred symbols and images. An unformed stone may, not only be a worthy object of religious devotion and worship but, also, indicate the mystical experience itself. A lack of details in the image may express the undifferentiated unity of consciousness. Such an image may, therefore, assume the form of language appropriate for the expression of the experience.<sup>2</sup> The second way to deal with this situation may be to use the words analogically. This is done when we use the same words to refer to both ordinary as well as mystical experience but "they are used not in a completely identical sense nor yet in completely different senses but in senses that are partly the same and partly different." And "this sameness-difference feature is the analogical use of terms."<sup>3</sup> We may, however be careful about the metaphysical assumptions of the doctrine. As all religious traditions do not agree upon the identical metaphysical assumptions, such as "fixed natures in things, some kind of exact proportionateness of beings, and the possibility of precise applications of the doctrine",<sup>4</sup> the value of analogical structure is bound to be relative in case of different religious traditions. And this, in a way, supports our view point presented here.

We may now conclude this paper. We have not worked out any elaborate structure of metaphysical assumptions. We have merely hinted at the need to view the problems of religious language in the context of relevant religious traditions. It is equally important to remember this aspect in any discussion of trans-religious language. Second, we should not overlook the validity of practice as an aspect of truth.

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1. Kvastad, *Loc. Cit.*, p. 199.

2. That fact that the students of mystic experience may have to undertake a study of this language, by itself, is not an adequate argument against it.

3. Cf. E. L. Mascall, *Existence and Analogy* (London : Longmans, Green & Co. Inc., 1949). He has restated the doctrine of analogy in the book.

4. Donald Wallhout, *Interpreting Religion* (Englewood Cliffs, N. J. : Prentice-Hall, Inc, 1963). p. 122.

# Meaning, Use And Reference

A. K. Chatterjee

## I

### Meaning of Meaning

Any attempt to give a satisfactory account of what meaning consists in would flounder unless it is kept in mind that there are several meanings of 'meaning' and it is therefore to be made clear which particular meaning is in question. The word 'meaning' says, Max Black, is "a Casanova of a word in its appetite for association". Ogden and Richards maintained that there are twenty-three different meanings of 'meaning'. A more recent author is even more generous and gives us no less than fifty-one senses of the word. We need not enter into this inflationary race. We can indicate here that only that sense of 'meaning' is central to our discussion which speaks of meanings of words, phrases, sentences, i.e. of linguistic expressions. We shall ignore the other senses in which we speak of meanings of persons, events, facts etc. We exclude such uses as illustrated in 'Ram means business', 'Rains mean good crops', 'Gandhiji's life is full of meaning', etc. These senses may not be entirely unrelated to the central sense of linguistic expressions, but we isolate here only that sense in which linguistic expressions have meaning. Even here there are difficulties. When a teacher enters his class and finds written on the black board 'X (the teacher's name) is a fool', he may well angrily ask, 'What is the meaning of those words?'. Obviously he is not unaware of the linguistic meaning of the words and hence his query concerns, not linguistic meaning, but what the *action* of writing the words means.

The intractability of an adequate theory of meaning is owing to the fact that not only are there several competing

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This paper was read at a seminar at Rabindra Bharati University, Calcutta, in March 1971.



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## I

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theories in the field but such theories are attempting to answer quite different questions. Failure to disentangle some important distinctions have added to the murky atmosphere of much of contemporary philosophy. Some of the questions that might be asked about meaning are :

- (1) Are meanings entities of some sort ?
- (2) What are the conditions for an expression to be meaningful ?
- (3) What is it for two expressions to mean the same ?
- (4) What factors cause words to change their meaning ?
- (5) What is a minimal meaningful unit ?
- (6) Is meaning the same as reference ?
- (7) Is meaning a function of syntax alone, or does it also have semantic links ?
- (8) How is a linguistic expression related to the external world ?
- (9) What is the relation between an utterance and the speaker ?
- (10) Does the question of meaning necessarily presuppose an ontology ?

These questions, and there are many more, are not always carefully distinguished with the result that the participants engaged in the controversy often talk at cross purposes. Only a philologist or a sociologist of language, for example, would be interested in the question of the factors causing words to change their meanings. The problem of ontology has loomed large in the framework of a revisionist metaphysics but it can, I think, be sidestepped in case one wants to confine himself to the level of simple description of linguistic phenomena as elicited in our everyday employment of words. The question whether meanings are entities of a sort reduces to the problem of the existence of abstract entities and thus to the problem of universals. Other questions are important in various degrees, but cannot all be fully discussed in a short paper. I shall incidentally touch upon some

of them, while being mainly concerned with the central problem of reference.

The first question that confronts us at the very outset is about the minimal linguistic unit that can be said to be meaningful. Do words have meaning in themselves, or is it only a complete sentence that is meaningful? According to Bhartṛhari there is no division of the signification of a sentence. Each sentence has a unique meaning which is further unanalyzable. But since there is no limit to the construction of new sentences, there would be an infinity of such meaningful units. How is such an infinity to be acquired by learning at all? Bhartṛhari really believes that different sentences manifest but fragments of a single impartite cosmic meaning, the whole, but that is to transcend the empirical level of analysis of language altogether. To begin with the words seem to be more economical in theory, since the stock of words in a language is finite, whereas the possibility of ever new sentences emerging by manipulating them is always open. If whole sentences are the units of meaning, how do we make new sentences and succeed in communicating them to others who had never heard them before? Both Wittgenstein and Chomsky are greatly exercised over this problem as to how a new sentence which has not been learned before could be constructed and understood. That it is primarily words that should have meaning, and not sentences, is a fact about language which depends upon the sort of creatures we are. Phonemes, morphemes, words, phrases, sentences, are all relatively arbitrary units, singled out and employed in the analysis of language. If we could remember it and manage it, we might have taken some unit larger than sentences, say a speech or a conversation, and then talk of the meaning of a sentence with respect to this larger unit. Since words are more conveniently manageable, we tend to take them as units of meaning, though words are as much abstractions as sentences are in the total speech act.

Words are generally said to have meaning, and not sentences. We speak of understanding what is said and of knowing the meaning of words. We do not generally speak of 'understanding



a word' or of 'knowing the meaning of what is said'. 'What does that sentence mean?' is an odd question, or is a somewhat special question. It can be asked in connection with a sentence in a foreign language, e. g. 'What does 'Es regnet' mean?'. Here a sentence approximates a word. But generally sentences cannot be said to have or not to have a meaning. One cannot show or even try to show that two sentences differ in significance in the way one can show that two words differ in meaning. One can show that two sentences differ in significance by showing that they have different syntactic structures or that their constituents differ in meaning.

Single words are not generally said to be meaningless. 'Faith is a meaningless word' is a cynical remark. A word has meaning : what does not have meaning is not a word but a nonsense syllable, or a set of syllables, or a proper name.

A language does not consist however of single words. The utterance of a single word, say 'man', does not say anything unless taken as an ellipsis of a whole utterance. Nor does even a string of morphological elements, each meaningful in itself, succeed in saying something. Any collection of meaningful words does not produce a significant sentence. It seems that a word has a logical shape into which another word with a particular shape alone can fit in, like the several pieces of a zigsaw puzzle. Which words will go along with which others is a matter of the syntactical structure of the sentence. Words may be acquired through learning but their logical shape and their mutual compatibility, or otherwise, is something which does not seem to have been learned. This linguistic competence, as Chomsky calls it, seems to be an intuition, which may even be innate as he suggests. The logical shape of words is not articulated when they stand in isolation, but is made explicit only when they occur in the context of a complete sentence. This is the real point underlying the theory of anvitābhidhānavāda as favoured by Prabhākara. Prabhākara does not mean, as the grammarians do, that words in isolation are meaningless. Indeed they do have meaning but that is not articulated outside the context of a sentence.

Wittgenstein's echo (Tr. 3.3) of Frege's dictum "Only in the context of a sentence do words mean something" (*Foundations of Arithmetic*, Sec. 62) is simply a latter-day expression of anvitābhīdhānavāda of the Guru school. All this does not make the sentence the unit of meaning; the latter only provides the context or the framework in which alone word-meaning is articulated. After all words are employed only in order to make sentences. If sentences were the primary building-blocks of meaning, how could we ever make new sentences we did not learn before, unless of course if there is a Platonic realm of timeless sentences and we somehow intuit them. But if such readymade sentences were already available why is syntactic structure of such crucial importance?

It has sometimes been supposed that whether or not two words differ in meaning depends on whether or not the substitution of one for the other preserves the truth value of statements in which the word in question happens to occur. First of all we have to find out whether what we have are really two distinct words. The particles 'a' and 'an', for example, can almost never be substituted for each other and yet they are allomorphs of the same morpheme; and are therefore not synonymous. This criterion however fails in the case of the recalcitrant sentences occurring in 'referentially opaque' contexts. If a bachelor is an unmarried male, can we substitute the latter expression for 'bachelor' in " 'Bachelor' has eight letters"? What happens to the criterion of synonymy in nonextensional compounds? Furthermore substitution of one word for another in a sentence may preserve the truth value of that sentence and yet the two words may differ in meaning. The truth conditions for 'The glass is exactly half full' and 'The glass is exactly half empty' are the same and yet 'full' and 'empty' differ in meaning.

Difference in meaning between two elements 'a' and 'b' is not merely a function of phonetic or orthographic factors but also depends on structures of utterances in which 'a' and 'b' occur. Take the pair of sentences, 'Where is the orange flower?' and



'Where is the orange grower?', or again the pair, 'Where is the red flower?' and 'Where is the red sympathiser?'. In each case the structure of the relevant constructions has been altered. The logical shape of the modifiers 'orange' and 'red' has changed in contour. In consequence there has been a shift in meaning, since in each case an extra morphemic element has been introduced, viz. '-er', which is a morphemic segment of 'grower' and 'sympathiser' but not of 'flower'. The etymology too of a word is generally, but not invariably, suggestive and appeals to etymology are of great help in determining what meaning a word has. This may be overdone, as for example by Heidegger. Nevertheless, words rarely throw off every trace of their former meaning in the course of their transformations in time.

## II

### Reference Theory of Meaning

Apparently the simplest and the most plausible account of meaning is to say that the meaning of a word is identical with its referent, or consists in its relationship to what it refers to. A proper name is taken as the paradigm of a meaningful unit. With the meaningfulness of proper names there is apparently no difficulty. There is the name 'Fido', there is the dog 'Fido', and the name is somehow a part of the object it names. Reference theory merely generalises this account. Any word is a name and behaves as a proper name does. It must have a referent in order that it may have a meaning. Frege went to the extent of saying that even a proposition is a name.

This crude theory soon breaks down, when it is taken as a complete theory of meaning. Frege himself pointed out that two expressions may have the same referent, but differ in meaning, and he gave us the famous 'morning star' puzzle. That the two expressions 'morning star' and 'evening star' happen to have the same referent is not a matter of definition of words but is, on the contrary, an empirical discovery. A variety of names could have been given to the same object but the names could still be

non-synonymous. Meaning can vary without a corresponding variation in the referent. Hence Frege recognized another dimension of meaning, viz. the 'sense' of a word, which is entirely different from its referring capacity.

Seen in this light it seems obvious that any nominal expression need not be a referring one and yet may be meaningful, a doctrine as old as Pāṇini. It should not be assumed that just because we employ the noun 'meaning' there is something to which the noun refers. The question, 'What sort of thing or entity is meaning?', is a spurious question. We should fight against the temptation to suppose that nouns must stand for things. The "Fido-Fido" doctrine is a reification or hypostatisation of entities. In the phrase, 'in the nick of time' or 'for the sake of Ram,' there is not something, a 'nick', which belongs to time, or an entity, 'sake', which belongs to Ram. The controversy regarding the existence of propositions as meanings of sentences is an example of this confusion.

Then there are many classes of words like prepositions, conjunctions, etc. which do not stand for individual referents or discriminable aspects of things. These are the 'syncategorematic words' which have no meaning in isolation. Russell calls them 'incomplete symbols'. They only modify the sense of the whole sentence in which they occur. Further, we are faced with a similar trouble with the 'categorical' terms themselves. Words do not refer by themselves but speakers of a language use them to refer to something. They refer only when so used. Words may be employed to refer, or again for something else, and reference therefore cannot be coextensive with meaning.

And the difficulty about the meaningfulness of a sentence remains. If to have meaning is to refer, what does a whole sentence refer to? Frege says that all sentences refer to truth values. Bradley would have said that the universe as a whole is the referent of any sentence. C. I. Lewis claimed that Truth, conceived as a single abstract entity, is the referent. It is easily seen how grossly inflated these theories are.



There is also the question of what it is that connects an expression with its referent. Referring is to be located somewhere in the activity of the users of language. No linguistic element has any semantic status except by virtue of what the language-users do with it. Meaning is not a sort of entity with which a word has to be related in order to be meaningful. Meaning of a word cannot be identified with any entity not already specified as a meaning. Meanings are of such a *sui generis* character that they cannot be identified with any class of entities otherwise specified.

Because of the dark spots in the reference theory of meaning, some philosophers, Ryle for instance, say that it is a mistake to confuse meaning and reference. They maintain that there is a perfectly good central sense of 'meaning' which is distinct from that of 'reference' and they concentrate on the meaning of 'meaning' as sense, bypassing the hurdles of reference.

By far the most sophisticated version of the reference theory is provided by Russell's theory of description. Pruning the Meinongian undergrowth of referents, this theory questions the claim of many apparently referring expressions really to refer and the ontological argument of Meinong is cut to size. However there are certain uncritical assumptions behind the theory of descriptions which have to be elucidated. First, Russell assumes throughout that it is *expressions* which refer. However, as seen above, it is *we* who refer with the use of expressions. An expression can be said to be a referring one if it *could* be used by us to refer. This does not of course entail that one must, on every occasion of its use, succeed in referring.

Secondly, any sentence, for Russell, is either true or false, or it is meaningless. But a sentence *per se*, taken in abstraction from its context in which it is uttered, is neither true nor false. The sentence, 'I am bald', *per se*, does not have any truth value; it might be uttered by one man to say something true and by another to say something false. It is only the sentence as uttered in a certain context that is true or false. To say that two different propositions are being expressed by the same sentence only complicates the issue since the ontology of propositions

is highly unclear. The sentence, *per se*, though, is certainly not meaningless. It has meaning because it could be uttered in context to say something true or false.

### III

#### Meaning And Use

Defects of the reference theory are thought to be avoided if we 'don't look for the meaning but look for the use'. In the background is a pragmatic view of the nature of language and the distinction between sense and reference is neatly sidestepped. 'Meaning' is not to be located in some realm of being or other. Diversity of uses of language is stressed, protecting against oversimplifications. Learning the meaning of an expression is learning how to operate it, see how it is used in various contexts, what its role or function is. Meaning of an expression is contained in the rules or conventions controlling what can or cannot be said. As Ryle puts it, meaning is "not an entity but a style of operation performed with it, not a nominee but a role". Construction of different language games serves to bring out the many different roles that language can have and the different purposes to which it can be put.

It might seem natural to begin with the sentence since it is the smallest linguistic unit within which a complete action may be performed. One cannot *say* anything by just uttering a word. But an analysis of a sentence cannot be completed without an analysis of the morphological elements of the utterance. Sentences cannot be said to have uses at all; rather they are what we use words and phrases to make. Only then one can determine the actual significance of the utterance. Knowing what meaning the elements may have, understanding the constructions employed, may often be not enough, but is sufficient if one is concerned only to grasp the literal significance of a syntactically nondeviant utterance. But this means what meaning a word has cannot be a simple function of the sentences in which it occurs. If we are to determine the literal significance of an utterance, we must



first determine what meaning the morphological elements of the utterance may have. One does not understand what literal significance of a sentence like 'I want a hipocat' may be only by supposing that it is structurally similar to 'I want a cat'. But a knowledge of syntactic structure is not enough for explicating the literal significance of the sentence; obviously one must know what meaning 'hipocat' has in my idiolect.

The so called 'use theory' seems however to evade the basic issues involved. Meaning does not attach to particular activities. One does not give a word a meaning on a certain occasion by using it with a certain intention. Words, if misused, do not lose their meaning. A word is a common possession of the linguistic community and it has the meaning or the meanings it has by virtue of some general facts about what goes on in that community. We must look for general trends in linguistic behaviour if we are to exhibit meanings of words as functions of what speakers do with them. A sword does not cease to be a sword if it is used for buttering toast. Further, it has to be asked what makes the game we play a *language* game? Why are the words used not taken as mere noises that act like signals, on receipt of which the appropriate response follows? What makes a use of language a use of *language*? Use of language presupposes that linguistic expressions have meaning, which cannot be fully elucidated by, or reduced to, use. Language involves an elaborate system of rules which must conform to the criteria of objectivity and must not be merely subjective or idiosyncratic. If language is 'a form of life', it is a form of social life.

To understand what is done by using a word it is necessary to attend to phonetic, phonemic, morphological and syntactic factors as well as non-syntactic semantic factors. And still more may be required. "Don't forget your etiquette if you wish to get into high society", can be a play on the etymological doublet of 'etiquette', viz. 'ticket'. For a word has a history, which may be relevant. It is therefore wrong to say that meaning is use in the language since the use of a word depends on many factors, many of which have nothing to do with questions of meaning. And merely knowing

what meaning the words have or may have does not enable one to understand even a simple sentence like, 'He is horse riding'. Explication of meanings of its individual elements leaves out of account such facts as 'horse riding' is an endo-centric construction with 'riding' as the head, 'he is' is an exo-centric construction, and so forth. Even if one understands all the constructions involved, merely knowing what meanings the words may have does not enable us to understand the sentence, 'England had at least one laudable bishop'; it is necessary to catch the pun "there was a bishop by the name of 'Laud' ". Another way of making the point is to say that we may know what meaning a word has and yet not know how or when to use it. The dictionary says that 'familary' means 'of or belonging to servants'; here no reference is made to any sentence in which the word occurs. I know what the word means but I do not know how or when to use it. If someone tells me that 'ultus' means 'revenge', do I know how to use the word? Only if I can speak Latin. These facts are surprising only when seen from the vantage-point of a misguided theory.

The slogan 'meaning is use' is important in what it implicitly denies. It implies the denial of the view that meanings are abstract entities named or expressed by words. We explain meaning only by showing people how words are employed in life. The use theory has also the advantage of conveniently dealing with the troublesome 'syncategorematic' words, which have presumably a distinct use in language.

The basic problem however is of finding a sense of the word 'use' in terms of which meaning can be explicated. There are many types of linguistic use which are not relevant to questions about meaning. Take the following cases :

- (1) 'And' was used seven hundred times yesterday in Barrackpur.
- (2) The word 'namaskāra' may be used to terrify somebody when uttered, say, in a hollow voice on a lonely forest path at midnight.
- (3) Most people know how to use 'Om' correctly without knowing what it means.



- (4) Proper names have a use, but not so obviously a meaning.
- (5) Quite meaningless words can have a use. If I want to convince a judge that I am insane, it might be a good idea to answer his questions with gibberish.
- (6) One might explain the use of a certain word in a poem by pointing out that it rhymes with another word. In all the above examples it is obvious that these types of use are no part of meaning.

Of course one could isolate these types of use and eliminate them as irrelevant to meaning. Ryle points out that it is not use in the sense of 'usage' or 'utility' in terms of which meaning is to be explicated. We have to examine the standard or stock uses to which words may be put. Whether a word is a good one to shock people with, or whether it is more commonly uttered in one city than in another, has nothing to do with what its standard nondeviant proper use is. It is this sort of use in terms of which meaning is to be explained.

However, even when we have made these distinctions the theory is still not out of trouble. The standard use of an expression may be unconnected with its meaning. A sentence may have its standard use in elocution classes, but this aspect of its use tells us nothing about its meaning. Again the standard use of 'There is a spider on your back' is presumably to frighten people. But this function is not part of its meaning. It may be supposed that this sort of standard use is not the type indicated by the theory. But we have not been presented with a criterion by which to distinguish between those types of standard use that are relevant and those that are not. On the other hand, there are many sentences which have no standard use at all, yet whose meanings we can understand. I have no idea what the sentence 'My wife is an orange' might be used for, yet I know what it means, in that I am capable of paraphrasing or translating it. Again the sentence 'Pain is the stimulation of C-fibres' has no use in scientific theory as it stands at present,

but it might well come to have one. It would be highly implausible to suggest that it acquires a meaning only when it gains this use. In fact it is precisely because it means what it has always meant that it can be given a use at all.

Most of these difficulties also affect a use theory of synonymy. Suppose a 'good clock' is defined as a 'clock which does the job it was designed to do with great precision'. Yet the sentences containing these two phrases would be used differently—the first, to commend, the second, to report. Does this difference show up a difference in meaning? Lacking any account of what constitutes relevant differences in use, we are in no position to answer.

The use theory suffers from the crippling debilitation of circularity. Since not all aspects of use are relevant to meaning, the use theory is reduced to claiming that meaning can be explained in terms of those uses which are relevant to meaning. "The notion of use presupposes the notion of meaning (in its central paradigmatic sense) and it cannot therefore be used to elucidate the latter" (Findlay). No doubt our intuitions often tell us which uses are semantically relevant, but we cannot support these intuitions by an adequate theoretical account. The view that meaning is use is, as it stands, too vague to be assessed and a more developed theory of use has to be brought forward.

#### IV

#### Speech Acts

Austin initiated the important distinction between the different speech acts performed in uttering a sentence. Saying something is

- (a) uttering a certain sentence (locutionary act),
- (b) producing certain effects (perlocutionary act), and
- (c) something not briefly explained (illocutionary act), e.g. making a request, a promise, etc.

It is (c) which is essential. For a sentence to have a certain meaning is for it to be used to perform an illocutionary act.



The crux of the problem is not sentence meaning but word meaning. "Meaning of a sentence does not make sense" (Ryle). Words are more economical than sentences, since no limit can be put on the number of sentences that can be formed in a language. The illocutionary act potential of the sentences is surely somehow a function of the words it contains, plus the structure of their combinations into the sentence. A word gets a certain meaning through being assigned by a rule to make a certain distinctive contribution to the illocutionary act potential of sentences in which it occurs. Usually when a speaker is asked what he means by some sentence, it is a request for him to make more explicit just what he is suggesting. Sometimes the question, when raised in regard to a specific sentence, can be answered with another sentence which contains more familiar words or has a simpler grammatical construction. If such a procedure is not feasible we could point out to something which the sentence would properly be used to describe.

There are two good *prima facie* reasons for supposing that it will be illocutionary use of expressions that is most important in explaining meaning. Meaning is a matter of convention. Expressions have meaning, and mean what they do, by virtue of rules and conventions governing them. How convention generates meaning is another question—but that it does so in some way is beyond dispute. Now one important difference between illocution and perlocution is that the former are *typically* governed by rules and conventions, whereas just about any sentence can be used to produce just about any perlocutionary effect, quite irrespective of convention. Because of the typically convention-governed nature of illocutionary acts, it is natural to look in this direction to cast light upon meaning, itself a convention-governed phenomenon. Second, there is clearly an important connection between meaning and intending. It is a fact that I can produce perlocutionary effects quite accidentally, but it is *typically* required that an illocution be one that I intend in order to be the illocution it is. So we see that both meaning and illocution are intimately connected with intentions and

conventions. We might, on the basis of this, hope to analyse meaning in terms of illocutions rather than other aspects of use which do not have the same intimacy with intentions and conventions

The theory of synonymy may be widened by situating it in the context of illocutionary speech acts. Two terms are said to be synonymous if and only if they are interchangeable without altering truth values in all non-recalcitrant sentences. This account confines synonymy only to propositions, which alone have truth values. But what about questions or commands? Can these too not be synonymous? So we can say now that synonymous terms must be interchangeable in other sentences with different illocutionary forces.

The first objection that arises is that it is completely circular to explain the meaning of a sentence in terms of illocutionary acts, since one would have first to know what the sentence means in order to know *which* illocutionary acts are being performed with it. I may be able to know from the tone of voice and the context that a command is being issued, but to know which command, I must surely first know what the sentence means. How can one say what are the illocutionary acts performed by a sentence S unless one already knows what S means. Indeed Alston himself says: "Saying what the meaning of an expression is, is equivalent not to saying *what* its use (i. e. illocutionary potential) is, but rather to saying that it has the same use as another expression".

The most common objection against the view that meaning can be explicated in terms of illocutions is that one can often, if not always, distinguish between what a sentence means and what illocutionary act is performed with it. *Ipsa facto*, meaning and illocutionary force cannot be the same. I may know what the sentence, 'Pass the salt' means without knowing what illocutionary act is being performed. e. g. requesting or commanding. Or again, I may know, from the tone of voice and subsequent behaviour, what illocutionary act is being performed and yet



not know what a sentence means, since it was in Hebrew ! How then can meaning and illocutionary force be the same in any way, as they are too obviously distinguishable ? They may not be quite distinct aspects of an expression and may be intimately connected, but still it would be a fallacy to conflate them. "What is the meaning of 'S' ?" and "What illocutionary act is 'S' being used to perform ?" are distinct questions, though the answer to the first may require reference to illocutionary acts.

## V

### Reference Again

Specifying the use of a sentence does not give its meaning. One has to distinguish between the description of the use of a sentence and what is said by the user of that sentence. 'It is raining' is a move in the fact-stating language game, but this description of the move asserts nothing about the weather. We must distinguish between the what-is-said in a declarative speech act from the description of its use. The what-is-said need not of course be a distinct and independent abstract entity. We need not assume that corresponding to every conceptual distinction there must be in reality two distinct and separate things. The what-is-said may be an internal accusative of the speech act, as a dance is to the act of dancing. Saying is not a dyadic relation between two separate and distinct things, viz. utterance of the sentence and its meaning. There seems to be only one thing, viz. the declarative speech act and the what-is-said is a conceptually discernible aspect of this linguistic event. We cannot speak of the accusative as existing independently of its occurrence in the pseudo-dyadic relation of saying. The intentionality of the speech act is immanent.

One cannot be said to understand what the word 'x' means without also knowing what it is for something to be an 'x', i.e. without having the concept of 'x'. Application of words comes only when the concept is already available. When there is understanding of language, first we must not only understand a concept,

but-must also be able to recognize an instance falling under it, i.e. not only formal defining conditions for an 'x' but also what it is to count as an 'x'. It is as though we were concerned with the word's soul, its meaning and its soul is what remains invariant under all transformations of its body.

We are not forthwith entitled to say that 'bachelor' means an unmarried male. We have to show, first, that the sentence, 'A bachelor is an unmarried male' is not deviant, i.e. it can be employed without deviation in making a true statement. Secondly, we have to show that the statement is a metalinguistic one about the word 'bachelor' and not about bachelors as in 'A bachelor is a lonesome person'. The method of sorting out metalinguistic statements from non-metalinguistic ones is not at all easy.

Meaning, as already seen, is unconnected with any perlocutionary force that a speech act might have. The case with illocution is difficult. It would seem that sense of an expression must be prior to any illocutionary force potential the expression possesses. Whether a sentence is a description, a question, a command or a request, the sense of an expression employed to make these various illocutionary acts does not vary. In the sentences 'the door is shut', 'shut the door', 'is the door shut', the illocutionary force potential is obviously various. But is there not something in common in all of them? And do they not all have something to do with the situation of a door and its being shut? Hare calls the identical part in all these sentences the 'phrastic', while their illocutionary differences consist in the 'neustic', and it seems obvious that unless the 'phrastic' part is already understood, the 'neustic' part cannot be brought into play. This would go to indicate that locution is prior to illocution. Austin himself explains that locution "includes the utterance of certain noises, the utterance of certain words in a certain construction and the utterance of them with a certain *meaning*," (italics added). If according to Austin meaning is already contained in locution, any attempt to locate it in something else would be moving in a vicious circle. We must



first catch the sense of an expression before we can employ it to perform other speech acts.

A word can be thought of as a jewel associated with a set of sets of conditions, each member of the condition set being one facet of the jewel. Then which facet catches the light depends on contextual and linguistic environmental features, thus on its setting. 'He is my brother' (a male sibling), 'He has been a brother to me' (friend, comrade), 'He is a brother of the order'—in each case a different facet of the word is turned to catch the light. Use theory, and its more sophisticated version, the speech act theory, would seem to ignore the very basis on which use is grounded, viz. meaning or sense, and cannot therefore serve to illumine the latter, though the theory does help in dispelling the notion of a unidimensional approach to analysis of language. Meaning is completed only in a complete speech act and is abstracted only from the latter, but there is a core meaning of expressions without which a speech act could not even occur. Taken out of its setting semantic theory produces a synchronic account of language, which is at best a fiction; a language does not stay put to have its picture taken. To view a language synchronically is only to accept a convenient methodological stance, but an exclusively synchronic view of language is conducive not to philosophical rigour but to *rigor mortis*, owing to an hardening of categories. Meaning and use, saying and what is said are therefore necessarily bipolar and they could be conflated only at the cost of obscurantism and obfuscation. Meaning itself comprises both sense and reference and sometimes the one is important, sometimes the other. "What does the word 'tiger' mean?" is a somewhat deviant and perhaps even odd utterance. With such nouns, one asks not what the word means but rather "What is a 'tiger'?", whereas with some adjectives like 'good', one asks not "What is a good thing?" and not "What is good?", but rather "What does the word 'good' mean?" It is thus naive to suppose that there can be one and only one way of expounding the meaning of words: could there be one and only one possible map of a given terrain? The way we map an area depends on

the area and on our interests. So at one time we use one type of projection, at another time another.

Prior to use, prior even to sense, a more fundamental dimension of meaning is, I believe, reference. Meaning is not simply to be equated with reference, because all expressions are not referring. Reference is rather the horizon or the background against which alone we can talk of meaningfulness of expressions. Without reference, language loses its anchorage in reality. There could be devised a 'language' in which each symbol was defined in terms of other symbols. But if none of them referred to anything beyond other expressions, that language becomes useless for talking about the world. The Advaitin says that all meaning is denotative meaning, and that sense of words is ascribed. We need not go to the extent of saying that all words denote a single thing viz. *sattā*, but we can surely understand that without denotation we are left only with free floating words which fail to touch reality at any point.

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## COMMUNICATION IN RELIGIOUS ART

*N. S. S. Raman*

Most writers on Art and Aesthetics tend to treat religious art along with art in general, and seem to give no special importance to it. By 'religious art', I mean those forms of expression in painting, music, architecture, literature etc., which seek to convey a meaning or set of meanings in the context of any faith or religious belief. Such forms of expression are strong in societies, which are still governed by religious beliefs. But it is to be admitted that in recent years, art has been very much secularized. Since religious forms of art still persist and are by no means extinct, it is also necessary to give some special importance to them. No student of the history of art or of aesthetics can afford to ignore the fact that many forms of art have their origin in religious symbolism. There are even some who feel that secularization has damaged the emotive content of many forms of art (e.g. in the Marxist-oriented forms of artistic expression), but this is a controversy which I shall not be interested in this paper, for fear of being drawn into unnecessary polemic. I shall only speak of the nature, forms and content of communication in religious art. We may in this process be led unavoidably into the questions of aesthetic meaning, or rather into questions of meaning of religious symbols.

### I

It is quite familiar to all students of art, that all the foremost religions of the world have to be represented in the history of religious art, though the West-oriented reader may show interest only or overwhelmingly in Christian art. And all forms of expression are again represented in such a history-painting, sculpture, music, literature, architecture etc., though here again, the historian of religious art (e.g. Ananda Coomaraswamy or Stella Kramrisch) seems to show some partiality towards one or two

of these only. The difficulty lies in the modes of expression themselves, which are quite unlike one another, and quite complex in their symbolism. Religious themes like the Mandonna and the Child, the Crucifixion, Nativity of Christ etc. in painting come to one's mind. These are themes which have been represented over and over again in painting and sculpture. In music, one is reminded of various forms from the Gregorian chant to a great number of masses, which continue to be composed. One also thinks of passion plays and other forms of religious drama and narrative. One perhaps also thinks of various forms of church architecture. But fortunately religious art is not exhausted by these. The Western mind is always one-sided in its treatment of culture. It turns a blind eye to the existence of other cultures and religions, and Western aesthetic theories about art are somewhat clouded by this one-sided attitude. One should never forget that there is a great wealth of artistic expression even in the so-called 'primitive' religions. If one cultivates a broader outlook, then one finds that many of the notions in aesthetics, particularly those relating to symbolism may have to be revised. In any case, it may be necessary not to be led blindly by the set notions about the art and aesthetics, and apply them indiscriminately to our own artistic heritage, in view of the variety of religious forms of artistic expression in the non-Christian cultures. It is regrettable that even in our appreciation or criticism of Indian art, we tend to rely on West-oriented theories, based on one-sided and inadequate approach, just as in literary criticism, we rely on the standards set by criticism relating to English or French or German poetry, drama and prose.

Being the home of world's great religions, our heritage of religious art is very rich indeed. In the realm of religious architecture, one does not have to speak the language of Western architecture in order to make the ideas and concepts of Indian religious architecture intelligible. This applies also to the realms of painting, music and the literary media of expression. It will be our endeavour in the next section, to take up some of these forms and explain the nature and content of communication.



## II

It is sometimes said that 'the best form of music is what it should be—sacred'. Kṛṣṇa declares in the *Bhagavad-Gītā*: 'Vedānām sāmavedo 'smi'—Of all the Vedas, I am the Sāmaveda. The Indian tradition by and large has always regarded music as sacred, though in recent years music has been associated also with the sensual. Music, dance and chant indeed express the highest form of religious communication to the Lord—*Vṣṇorgānam ca nṣṭyam ca naṣanam ca viśeṣataḥ*' (*Bhāgavata-Purāṇ*). In this country all arts—music, sculpture, architecture, painting, dance, drama and literature have been subordinated to a religious outlook. These forms of art are essentially instruments for *bhakti*. The *Bhāgavata* aptly proclaims,

'*Śravaṇam kīrtanam Viṣṇoḥ smaraṇam pādasevanam.*  
*Arcanam vandanaṁ dāsyam sakhyam ātmanivedanam.*'

—devotion is of nine forms, listening to the song about God's glory, singing of Him, worshipping of His feet, meditation of God, salutation, service, friendship and offering of oneself.

The *bhakti* movement popularised this cult of worship and prayer through music. In fact prayer in all religions must be *chanted* or sung, in order that the emotive meaning is fully conveyed. Proper prayer to and worship of God is not through prose. In the *bhakti* tradition, four elements of musical communication are recognized—*rāga* (melody), *tāla* (rhythm), *svara* (musical note), *laya* (harmony). In Indian mythology, Nārada represents the celestial figure who leads the whole of mankind in *bhakti*—in devotional ecstasy. Both in the East and West, one of the most important expressions of religious art consists of music, which is the best way of articulating emotive meanings.

Dance is another important vehicle of conveying emotive religious experience, though it can never be separated from music, i. e. from melody and rhythm. Indian dance has always been infused with a religious element. Usually dance is always linked to a narrative, which may be mythological or simply descriptive of an emotion. The dance forms described by

Bharata, and the later forms like the Kathak, the Kathakali are not different from Bharata's own descriptions of dance in Bharata's *Nāṭyaśāstra*. Of course since its very inception, eroticism and *bhakti* have formed two apparently contradictory, but inseparable elements of dance. That is why *Nāṭyaśāstra* is also sometimes referred to as *Gandharva veda*. But the religious element<sup>1</sup> has never been overlooked. The later writers on aesthetics in India do not give so much importance to dance as they for example give to *Kāvya*.

Kāvya or poetry is another vehicle for articulating and communicating religious meaning. From this point of view even works like Kālidāsa's *Raghuvamśam* convey religious meanings. Of course the *Mahābhārata* and *Rāmāyaṇa* are no ordinary works. The veneration with which a great epic poem like *Rāmāyaṇa* is held today in every Hindu home is a sufficient index to the importance of poetry as an important vehicle of religious meaning. Of course, it is generally thought as the Sanskrit saying goes, that drama is better than poetry (*Kāvyeṣu nāṭakam ūṇyam*). Even a drama like *Abhijñāna-Śakuntalam* has a religious flavour about it, not to speak of such plays like those of Bhāsa. The poetic and the dramatic forms of expression coupled with music are ideally suited to convey emotive meanings and to evoke responses. Literary forms of artistic expression are better suited for this purpose than visual or plastic arts. This is why most religious texts are poetic or are akin to poetry. The growth of a logical or scientific attitude has helped the prose form to evolve. One may note in this connection that mythology is best expressed by poetry than prose.<sup>2</sup>

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1. Cf. Bharata's N. S. I. 18:

*Vedopavedaiḥ sambaddho nāṭyavac'o mahātmanā.*

*Evam bhagavatā sṛjto brahmaṇ lalitātmakeḥ.*

2. Schelling has given utmost importance to understanding of such religious symbols, which he expressed by the picturesque phrase, 'Mitwissenschaft mit der Schoepfung' ('sharing the secrets of creation'). In the Western world, in spite of a scientific and secular orientation of thought in recent years, the Dionysian tendency the 'underworld and lower spirit of ancient culture' as Spengler calls it, has not lost its significance.



In the realm of painting, nothing much remains of our ancient heritage, except some faded glories like that of Ajantā. Sculpture and architecture have provided us the clue to the great artistic expressions of ancient Indian religions. The symbolic plays a more significant role in the sphere of plastic arts as the meaning sought to be conveyed cannot be so articulate as in the realm of literature for obvious reasons. As in pure music, interpretation in terms of spoken and written language has to be vague and sometimes even fanciful. It should be noted, however, that much of the great works in the realm of plastic arts in ancient India have a religious meaning to convey. Even erotic sculpture is a part of the temple art. And any architecture worth the name in the ancient world is religious in character.

### III

So far I have described only some of the well-known forms of religious art in the Indian tradition. There are many other minor forms of artistic expression which I cannot describe for want of time. I have not also gone into the various theories of poetics in Sanskrit literature. Such accounts have already been given by greater and better minds than myself.<sup>1</sup> My statement of some of these forms should only serve as a preliminary to the understanding of the content of religious art. Unlike the Western forms of religious art in the post-Greek period of cultural history, which are mostly biblical in inspiration, Indian art is pluralistic. Buddhist art for instance is radically different from the Purāṇic, which again is different from the Vedic. This is particularly true of literary and plastic arts. A play like *Nagānanda*, which obviously is Buddhist in tone different in its message from a play like *Malavikāgnimitram*. Dance seems to have been very much alien to Buddhist tradition, with its austere overtones. The Jaina tradition too has characteristics of its own in so far as its artistic expressions are concerned.

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1. I refer in this connection to two outstanding works by S. K. De and P. V. Kane under identical titles '*History of Indian Poetics*'. No contemporary Indian philosopher, it should be noted, has shown any interest in the philosophy of Indian Art. Even those interested in Abhinavagupta are more interested in his metaphysical views than in his aesthetics.

The content of all art is emotive, and in particular, in religious art the emotive impact is used to convey the message of religious experience. Since religious experience is itself emotive, the affinity between the artistic and the religious becomes very close indeed, and so close that they sometimes become indistinguishable. This is very much noticeable in Indian artistic forms. *Bhakti* can best be expressed by music. Indeed the Lord says to Nārada :

*Nāham vasāmi vaikunṭhe na yogihṛdaye ratau.*

*Madbhaktā yatra gāyanti tatra tiṣṭhāmi Nārada.*

This explains why the great saints of the *bhakti* movement composed songs which are still sung to-day with great devotion. In *bhakti* music, the symbolism is usually not very complex. Sometimes barely the various names of the object of prayer are repeated. In the bhajans of Tulsi and Kabir, there is no philosophy expressed that cannot be understood by the layman. Yet the depth of feeling is attained by the words chosen and arranged and by the melody.

Not so with sculpture. The sculptor is all the time trying to create new forms, new representations of the object of religious experience. These may be gods and goddesses or representations from mythology or just erotic sculpture. Take for instance the representations of the Buddha. There are quite a number of them, each of them stylistically even if not formally, different from the others. They all try to achieve that serenity and peace in the figure. The sculpture in modern Hindu temples has a tendency to become stereotyped but the sculpture in great temples like Belur or Khajuraho are quite unique in their own way not only because of the nature of the object chosen, but also because of meaning conveyed. There is nothing unique about the representations of the phallus in the Śiva temples, but the plastic representations of Śiva (like the famous Natarāja of the temples Cidambaram) are not of the same order. In some cases the architecture of the temple conveys what the sculpture cannot convey : the grandeur and sacredness of the abode of God. This also partly explains.



why the temples are to be found very often on the top of hill or on the banks of rivers by the sea. In a gothic cathedral, the idea of grandeur is sought to be achieved by the soaring spires of the structure, but in the temple the expanse of the structure as in the temples at Rāmeśwaram and Madurā convey the same idea.

The supernatural is aptly explained by the mythological literature. The richness of the mythological lore in Hinduism is yet to be grasped by scholars. No other tradition in the world can equal the variety, the complexity and depth of symbolism found in Hinduism. Much of Sanskrit literature is based on mythological lore. And epic poetry like that of the *Rāmāyaṇa* and the *Mahābhārata* though they appear to have a historical basis have more a religious than historical significance. The former has almost been the holy book of Hinduism. It is a work of art in more respects than the Bible. Its motive, its poetry, its thematic construction is not to be found in any other holy book.

From the above discussion, two or three important points regarding the content of communication in religious art might emerge. Religious art in the first instance, is essentially indicative of an emotive experience. The vehicle chosen to communicate this religious experience could be music, dance, sculpture painting, mythology or any other form of literary expression. It would not be possible to subject them to a logical or scientific scrutiny, because the motives, modes and the meanings expressed differ from one form of art to another. Perhaps like all aesthetic experience (which appears qualitatively akin to religious experience), religious experience defies explanation or description in ordinary terms. But unlike aesthetic experience, it need not be abstract; it is not pure feeling, though as in aesthetic experience communication might sometimes break down between the artist and the spectator, listener or the reader; this is where religious experience passes over into mysticism, where it becomes highly individualized, private and enigmatic.<sup>1</sup>

1. Zen Buddhism provides an apt illustration of how communication in religious art breaks down to a point when it passes over into mysticism.

# THE PERSONAL AND THE IMPERSONAL IN INDIAN PHILOSOPHY

*R. K. Tripathi*

All religions whether theistic or non-theistic agree that the universe is law-governed. They go further and hold that the universe is not only law-governed, it is also morally governed, that is, the life of man and the events of the world have a moral principle behind them. Now the question is whether the moral law which governs the universe is personal or impersonal. Is the law made and enforced by a person who is superior to it or is the law superior to all persons and hence impersonal?

Russell observes that in European philosophy there are two distinct tendencies from the very beginning—the rationalistic and the empiricistic, and sometimes the one and sometimes the other predominates. Similarly we find a see-saw of the personal and the impersonal views going on in Indian philosophy. It is worthwhile therefore that we review the position and try to evaluate it.

## I.

Of the orthodox schools Mīmāṃsā, Sāṃkhya and Vaiśeṣika do not accept the existence of God but they do hold that the universe is law-governed and is a cosmos and not a chaos. They do so because they all accept the law of Karma and moral justice. This attitude is shared also by the non-orthodox schools such as Jainism and Buddhism. There is the law and it operates inerorably and impersonally. They do not speculate about the author of the law or about the operator; they just note that there is a law. They further note that the law of karma or the law of moral retribution is not like a physical law. For one thing, the moral law is not empirically discovered; it needs a



transempirical authority such as the Veda or a Yogi. For another, they govern not physical entities but morally responsible agents or conscious beings. There is also a third distinction. *Karman*s do not yield all their fruits immediately as physical events seem to do; they generate something like *pāpam* and *puṇyam* which bear fruits in course of time either here or hereafter. So the moral law seems to differ basically from physical laws. If so, can we say that the moral law also can operate impersonally like physical law? The operation of physical laws do not presuppose any judgement but does the moral also not require any judgement?

As pointed out above, the moral law is not an empirical generalisation but a metaphysical doctrine and so it is part of a metaphysical system or attitude. What is that attitude or way of looking at things which finds it difficult to accept an operator or author of the moral law? It seems to us that there are two basic issues a consideration of which leads some people to think that there is no person superior to the moral law as its wielder and controller. The first point is that they find it difficult to conceive of a person who can know everything about everyone in order to be able to apply the moral law. Obviously the governor of the universe from the moral point of view must be one who has infinite knowledge or who is omniscient. A person is always a limited and finite being; an infinite person is a contradiction in terms. Secondly even if an infinite person is admitted, the difficulty is not removed. The question arises whether such a person has some freedom or not. If he has freedom, then the law will not and cannot work uniformly i.e. like a law; in other words it will not be a law as it will be subject to the possibility of interference by a person who has the freedom to do so. If, however, the infinite person has no freedom to interfere then he is like a machine and not a person and it is therefore useless to postulate such a person. So if the law governs the person, the person is useless and if the person is superior to the law, it ceases to be a law.

## II

The Nyāya, the Yoga, the theistic schools of Vedānta and also Advaita Vedānta are advocates of the existence of Īśvara who is an infinite person. These systems differ regarding details but they agree about the existence of Īśvara who is infinite. It is therefore obligatory for them to take note of the above difficulties and to give a satisfactory answer if possible.

Theism in India seems to be different from Western theism. For one thing the God of Western theism is an absolute creator; He creates everything out of nothing and He creates not only the physical part of the universe but also souls. In India no theist believes that souls can be created; they are eternal. So far as the physical part of the universe is concerned, in Yoga Prakṛti is responsible and in the Nyāya Īśvara depends on atoms that are eternal. In theistic schools of Vedānta also Īśvara is not said to create matter but in Advaita Vedānta matter is a product of *avidyā* and not something coeternal with Īśvara as in other theistic schools. These two views of creation—Eastern and Western, give rise to a problem regarding the moral law. Like every thing else, the moral law too, in Western theism, depends on God; it is not anything independent. If so, can we say that God is moral? For God to be moral, it is necessary that there is a standard in terms of which God could be regarded as moral. In other words the moral law should be impersonal, and not merely the will of some one, even of God. The point may be clearer by putting the thing as follows. Is something moral because God wills it or does God will it because it is moral? In the former case, God becomes super-moral or trans-moral and there seems to be no point in saying that God is moral. In the latter case God can be intelligibly said to be moral as there is a standard for Him too but then morality would be something above God and impersonal. Western theism does not seem to see the contradiction in holding on the one hand that God is moral and on the other that everything depends on Him at the same time; it is as if the personal and the impersonal both are taken to be ultimate at the same time. But as pointed out above, that is not possible. Jainism, Buddhism



and Mīmāṃsā are consistent in as much as they regard the law as impersonal. Dharma or the law is binding on man not because it is the will of somebody or someone's commandment but because it is the law.

### III

In Indian schools of theism the inconsistency seen above in the Western views does not arise. The reason is that God is here not regarded as moral but as transmoral ; He is neither moral nor immoral but above both. Moral law or *dharma* is thus not supreme, it has been given to man by God, Vedas which give us the *dharma* or the moral law are the Lord's breath. The Lord does not merely give us the law, He also operates it. He enforces and executes the moral law in such a manner that the whole process of birth and rebirth is directed to the supreme goal of attaining freedom from bondage or karma. It is as if the law is so made to operate that the process throws the Jiva out of itself. There is also a third point in keeping God above the moral law, the law which is at the root of both the bondage and the freedom of man. The trans-moral being of God demonstrates the possibility of man attaining transmoral state or freedom. But even though God is transmoral, He is not trans-personal and the relation between man and God is personal and not impersonal. So we can say that in a general way in theism everything is personal—the nature of god, the moral law and also the relation of man to God. The concept of personality is ultimate. That God as a person is infinite and omniscient is an article of faith and not a matter of rational proof as reason is not competent to understand the mysteries associated with God, the most important being that His incarnation as man. God comes down to earth to protect and preserve His law or order, but how he does so is a mystery. How can the infinite assume a finite body ?

### IV

Advaita Vedānta has its own approach to the problem of the personal and the impersonal and the associated problems of the omniscience and freedom of Īśvara. First of all, Īśvara is

not ultimate but penultimate. Īśvara is Brahman associated with māyā and is to that extent phenomenal but phenomenal not in the sense that He is fettered like jīvas. Īśvara is eternally free and His association with māyā is a free association in the sense that He dominates māyā and is not dominated by māyā. His personality is therefore māyāvic and not real; māyā is not constituent of His Being. Dharma or morality being the law of this phenomenal being, Īśvara is therefore itself phenomenal and not ultimate. Moral law therefore can be superseded by Īśvara though He does not ordinarily do it; He does it only when He finds it necessary for the ultimate good of jīvas, the good which is not moral good but spiritual good or freedom. The moral law refers to karmas and karmas belong neither to pure spirit nor to pure matter but to jīvas, i. e., spirit as associated with *avidyā* or fettered spirit. It comes to this then that neither jīvas nor the moral law nor the karmas are ultimate; they are of the phenomenal sphere and Īśvara and the jīvas with whom He deals are both persons and have freedom but the freedom of Īśvara is of an order different from that of the jīvas. The personality of jīvas is not self-assumed but the result of their karmas and so their freedom also is not real freedom. The personality of Īśvara is self-assumed and so His freedom is real freedom. The freedom of two belonging to two different levels, the freedom of the jīva does not and cannot limit the freedom of Īśvara. It is as if the jīvas are free on the surface while Īśvara is free on a deeper level, and so the jīvas inspite of their freedom are in the hands of Īśvara. Ordinarily jīvas are governed by the system or law established by God but God can over-ride the law if and when He chooses. So freedom is ultimate and not the law.

As already pointed out Īśvara has to be not only free but also omniscient if He has to govern the universe. Omniscience is of two kinds: one kind of it is that in which one comes to know everything by knowing the reality of everything<sup>1</sup>. This

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1. See my paper on Omniscience in *Problems of Philosophy & Religion*. R. H. U. 1971.



is possible even for jīvas when they come to know their self as Brahman or the universal self. The other kind of omniscience is that in which the details or the particulars of everything are known. This is possible only for Īśvara who has both kinds of omniscience. Īśvara knows everything as He is not outside anything but is the innerself of everything. Īśvara knows Himself as the self of everything and therefore also knows everything. His knowledge of everything does not mean predetermination because the superficial freedom of the jīva by virtue of which he does karmas of his choice is allowed to operate. So Īśvara is said to be *anumantā* or one who permits freedom to jīvas.

The Advaitic doctrine of the incarnation of Īśvara shows how He can be free and unlimited even though He has personality. Īśvara assumes a body which is *māyāvic* or *daivī* and so He is not bound or affected by it as jīvas are. His body and personality are self-assumed but not so in the case of jīvas who are under and not above the law of karma. Īśvara appears to be like jīvas but really He is not.

So in Advaita Vedānta Īśvara is a person but Brahman is impersonal. This is because Brahman as the truth of everything has to be impersonal. Truth must be impersonal or else it will not be truth. Truth is truth not because Īśvara knows it; rather Īśvara knows it because it is truth. But while truth has to be impersonal, a law has to be personal. This is how the Vedāntin synthesises the personal and the impersonal; the secret of it is the acceptance of two levels of reality, the *vyāvahārika* and the *pāramārthika*, the phenomenal and the ultimate. This means the acceptance of the doctrine of *māyā* which makes possible the incarnation of God as man. Because of *māyā* God can be man and yet not limited as man. Even as man God remains God. Theists being realists can explain satisfactorily neither the omniscience nor the incarnation of God.

## WHAT IS RELIGION ?

R. S. Misra

It is not possible to give a universally accepted definition of religion. It has been given different meanings in different religious traditions and it is seen to undergo considerable change in meaning in the same religious tradition in the course of time. Religion may mean one thing to a Hindu, another to a Muslim or a Christian, still another to a Buddhist and in this way we have a great diversity in the ideas and definitions of religion. Among persons having the same religious denomination, there may be wide differences in their understanding of the meaning of religion. But there are certain human activities, certain basic human attitudes, certain beliefs entertained by man and certain human experiences that are specifically characterised as religious. We can have a clear understanding of what religion is, of its meaning, nature and function by making a serious study and analysis of all such human activities, beliefs, attitudes, experiences etc. These factors are found to be present not only in the great religions of the world but in the primitive or tribal religions as well. We find some forms of religious belief and practices, howsoever rudimentary they may be, even in the most primitive societies. Thus religion is a universal phenomenon. It is found to characterise the life of man, individually as well as collectively at all the different stages of culture. It gives man a certain direction and purpose. It makes his life meaningful.

Here I propose to point out, in brief, only some of those fundamental facts and features which, according to me, constitute the real essence of religion. It will also entail an analysis of the human situation which reveals the necessity of religion for man and its important role in his individual and social life.



A most important feature of religion seems to lie in its belief in the supernatural. The supernatural is conceived and interpreted in different ways in different religions and religious sects. Some religions believe in a supreme Deity or God who is the Creator of the world and of man and who controls their destiny. He is conceived as beyond space and time, as one who transcends the world and the man and Who at the same time prevades their existence and endows them with real meaning and significance. He is eternal, immortal and possessed of immeasurable bliss. He is also omnipotent, omniscient and omnipresent. Man is supposed to stand in a peculiar relation with Him. Though man is in the world and is in some respects a part of the world, yet his whole existence cannot be explained in terms of the world. His existence can be rightly understood and appreciated, ultimately speaking, only in terms of his relationship with God as He alone is supposed to constitute the real meaning and goal of man's life. Man's fulfilment or salvation lies in his realising his deep and intimate relationship with the supreme Being or God, his ultimate union with Him and in obeying His will and commandment. This is said to constitute the supreme truth of religion and of religious life. This view finds a most graphic, powerful and meaningful expression in some of the great religions namely, Hinduism, Sikhism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam. In this respect these religions can be rightly characterised as God-centred religions.

There are some religions which do not give any place to any supreme Being called God. Jainism and Buddhism are neither centred in God nor they give Him any place in their religious scheme and framework. But they also pin their faith in the supernatural. They conceive it as a state of existence which is beyond this world, which is free from the limitations of space and time and also from evil, suffering and death. It is the state of liberation called *kaivalya*, *mokṣa* or *nirvāṇa*. Thus these religions give central place to *mokṣa* or *Nirvāṇa* which is regarded as the supreme goal of man's life.

"A great contribution that religion has made towards the enrichment of man's individual and social life lies in its deeper understanding and interpretation of human existence. Religion reveals the deeper dimensions of man's existence which constitute his true being. It does not regard man simply as a natural being. It does not conceive him as a being whose existence can be adequately explained in terms of his body and his mental life. Body and mind constitute an integral part of man's existence in the world but they do not provide adequate explanation of man's existence as a whole. Man is conceived in religion as something more than his psycho-physical organism. He is possessed of a deeper dimension of existence which constitutes the basis of his body-mind organism, but which at the same time transcends it. This dimension of man's existence is characterised by some religions as spirit or *Ātman*. Hinduism regards *Ātman* as constituting the real essence of man's life. Body is mortal but the *Ātman* is immortal. *Ātman* is free from birth and death and from the sufferings and evils of life. The great tragedy of man's life is that he is not aware of eternal and immortal existence of his *Ātman* and is conscious only of his bodily existence. He knows himself simply as a natural being, as a being whose existence is completely conditioned by time and can be explained ultimately in terms of birth and death. Man as a natural being is heading every moment towards the wide open jaws of death. In spite of his great extraordinary achievements in the different fields of life, he remains hopelessly subject to suffering and death. So if we regard ourselves simply as natural or temporal beings and refuse to accept any divine or eternal element within us, then death constitutes our ultimate possibility.

Religion does not admit this understanding and interpretation of man's existence. It believes in the continuity of man's existence in some form or other beyond death. Death can finish only the body but not the soul (*Ātman*) of man. According to the Hindu view, man does not enjoy only one life on earth. The present life happens to be just one among the many lives that the soul has enjoyed in this earthly existence. Human life is subject to *Karm* :



and rebirth. Man according to the Hindu view will remain involved in the cycle of birth and death so long as he does not attain liberation. Thus freedom from the cycle of birth and death and the suffering of life and the attainment of liberation constitutes the *summum bonum* of man's life. The soul or spirit of man (*Ātman*) enjoys divine life and eternal, immortal and blissful existence. That is called the state of liberation. Even those religions which do not believe in the rebirth of man in the world or in the cycle of birth and death do believe in the continuity of man's existence after death and in his enjoyment of the imperishable divine life in the state of salvation. Buddhism which does not believe in the reality of souls does have faith in a state of existence after death, as I have pointed out earlier, which is called the state of absolute freedom (*Nirvāṇa*).

Thus, according to the religious view, every man is possessed of destiny. While he is in the world, he has to make adequate preparations for the attainment of the supreme value of his life and the fulfilment of his destiny. Every religion puts before man the way to attain salvation, the way to the Divine and everlasting life. Though the ways to salvation and the enjoyment of divine life as pointed out by different religions sometimes differ in a radical way from each other, yet there is found a unity in them in one fundamental respect. They all reveal to men the way to realise the deeper dimensions of their being and experience the divinity that is within them or that conditions their existence. It is not given to every man to have direct experience of the Divine that is within him in this life. He has experience of God, soul or the divine life in faith. Religious life can be understood and appreciated mainly in terms of faith and cannot be conceived without it. But there are also some men called saints, mystics, yogis and prophets who can experience direct communion or union with the Divine or who have a direct realisation or liberation even in this life. They bear clear witness to those dimensions of man's consciousness and existence which remain altogether unknown to common people. Thus there are certain vital truths of religion which must intimately and

deeply concern man's life and which can be experienced not only in terms of faith but directly and in a living manner. When Vivekananda asked Ramkrishna Paramahansa whether he had seen God, he immediately answered "not only I see God but I see Him more clearly than I see you".

Thus religion is strictly speaking not merely a theoretical discipline. It is not just a matter of academic interest. It is essentially a way of life, a life that is lived at its deepest level. It represents a life that is lived by man when he undergoes a radical change in his inward being and becomes aware of the depth of his existence. Man usually lives at his surface consciousness. He remains mostly unaware of the deeper levels of his consciousness and being. But if he makes adequate efforts, he can have a direct experience of the deeper dimensions of his consciousness, of the depth of his being. He now no more remains centred in his ego and lives his true spiritual existence which frees him altogether from the anxieties and sufferings of life and the fear of death. In India, man has from the very ancient times aspired to attain this state of existence and he has developed the science of yoga to realise this supreme value of the mystery of life. The practice of yoga sometimes puts man in possession of some extraordinary powers and he can perform some miracles if he so desires. But that is not the real aim or function of yoga. The real aim of yoga is to free man from the limitations of his normal mental consciousness and enable him to realise his true being which is not conditioned by suffering, time and death.

According to the religious view, specially as it has been developed in India, the ordinary life of man is full of suffering. Man in the normal course is subject to all the worries, anxieties and the distractions of life. He suffers from anger, fear, greed, envy, lust, pride and a host of other psychic problems. Thus his personality in the normal course suffers from a lack of integration. We do not generally have adequate or sufficient control over our mind, over our desires, emotions, passion, anxieties etc. Even though we suffer from this deficiency in our



nature and character yet we do not seem to be always conscious of it and do not make any serious and sincere effort to get rid of it. We try to attain maximum efficiency in our professional life but we just allow our nature to take care of itself. It is left in the state of emotional instability and becomes victim to all the vagaries of mind and some times even to the most undesirable outbursts of passions. But religion at its deeper level makes man acutely conscious of his psychic instability, internal disharmony and his real human situation. It calls this condition of man the state of suffering and it shows man the right way to attain freedom from this state of internal disharmony, discord and suffering. It is possible only by a proper development of moral and spiritual consciousness and the control of mind. According to the Hindu view which is equally shared by other Indian religions, it is possible for man not only to attain perfect control of mind but even to silence it completely. That is called the state of *samādhi*. It is a state of man's existence where he attains complete freedom from all the distractions, anxieties and sufferings of life and enjoys his true divine existence. It is in this state that man can be said to enjoy complete and perfect integration of his personality.

But integration of personality is attained by man even at the other levels of religious or spiritual consciousness. It is effected by the cultivation of moral values and faith in the higher spiritual existence. The systematic cultivation of moral and spiritual values like truth, non-violence, mercy, compassion, love, detachment, fellow-feeling etc. not only enriches the life of the individuals but it also provides solid foundations to peace and harmony in man's social life. Religion not only seeks to cure the individual from the evils and sufferings of his life but it also strives to remove the evils that corrode peace and harmony in human relationship and man's social life.

In this respect religion is a great healer of man. It heals man by giving him the much desired peace of mind. A truly religious life frees man in a considerable measure from the many anxieties

and fears that haunt him in his every day existence. Religious life is primarily a life of faith. A man possessed of true religious faith is in a position to bear the ups and downs of life with greater courage, patience and equanimity than one who is altogether devoid of it. Thus religious life is in certain respects very intimately related to the physical as well as psychic health of man.

Religion is a vast subject and it has been approached and studied by modern scholars from many angles, namely, theological, philosophical, psychological, sociological, anthropological, phenomenological, historical etc. In the present paper I have not tried to approach religion from any of these academic points of view. I have simply made a modest attempt to point out some of those fundamental facts and features which, according to me, constitute the true essence of a living religion and of a truly religious life.

It is this living religion that enriches and ennobles man's life and makes it really meaningful.

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# YOGA AND MAN'S EXISTENTIAL SITUATION

R. S. Misra

Yoga is deeply concerned with the mystery of human life. It makes an analysis of human existence and reveals its essential structure. Man is, ordinarily, not aware of himself, of the nature and structure of his existence. He is not conscious of the ambiguities of his life and of his existential situation. Yoga tries to awaken man to his real existential situation by providing him a deep insight into the mystery of his existence. It makes him conscious of both the sides of his existence, the conditioned as well as the unconditioned or the state of bondage and the state of freedom. Yoga also enables the individual to free himself from his perennial bondage and attain the state of freedom.

This truth is expressed clearly by the definitions of Yoga or the meanings attributed to it in the Indian tradition. I propose to consider here, mainly, the definition of Yoga as given in the *Yoga-Sūtra* of Patañjali. According to him, Yoga is the elimination of the transformations of mind, *citta*<sup>1</sup>. Vācaspati Miśra equates *citta* with *antaḥkaraṇa*, *buddhi*.<sup>2</sup> It represents the entire psychic structure of man. Patañjali and the great commentators on his *Yoga-Sūtras* like Vyāsa, Vācaspati, Vijñābhikṣu and others give a detailed and graphic account of the structure of *citta*, of its different levels, *bhūmis* of its different kinds of transformations, *citta vṛtti* and finally, of the elimination or cessation of all the transformation of *citta*, *nirōdha*. The state of *nirōdha* is called *samādhi*. It represents the real state of Yoga<sup>3</sup>. It is a state of consciousness where mind ceases to operate and is completely silenced. This state is not experienced by man at the level of

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1. *Yogaścitta-vṛtti-nirōdhaḥ*. (Y. S. I. 2).

2. *Citta-śabdena antaḥ-karaṇam buddhim upalakṣayati*.

(*Tattva-vaiśārādī* I. 1).

3. *Yogaḥ samādhiḥ*. (Yoga-bhāṣya I, 1).

his mental consciousness or surface consciousness. The only experience that one has of the cessation of mental processes is in the state of deep sleep. But the state of *samādhi* is radically different from *suṣupti*, the state of deep sleep. *Suṣupti* is a natural state; it is brought about by the automatic functioning of nature and constitutes a normal state of human existence. *Samādhi* represents a supernatural state; it is attained by man voluntarily and by serious and sustained efforts. Though it is open to all, yet it is actually attained by the very few. In *suṣupti*, *citta* is completely dominated by *tamas*, the principle of darkness and inertia. *Samādhi* according to Vācaspati Miśra, marks the absence of *tamas* and *rajas* and the abundance of *sattvaguna*, the principle of light. Ultimately, it represents the transcendence or freedom from all *guṇas*<sup>1</sup>. These two states of *citta* are characterised by Patañjali as *ekāgra* and *niruddha*, the states of *samprajñāta* and *asamprajñāta samādhi* respectively. One may further distinguish *suṣupti* from *samādhi*. Though *suṣupti* marks the cessation of mental processes; yet it contains their impressions, *saṁskāras*. These *saṁskāras* give rise to the stream of ideas in dream and in the waking state. But in *samādhi*, even the *saṁskāras* are rooted out. *Suṣupti* does not effect any change in the psychic structure of the individual. But *samādhi* necessitates a complete and radical transformation of the individual's psychic structure. The state of *suṣupti* like the waking state is conditioned by ignorance and represents a state of bondage. But *samādhi* ultimately marks complete freedom from ignorance, *avidyā* and constitutes the way to freedom. Thus the states of *suṣupti* and *samādhi* are essentially and radically different from each other.

In order to have a clear understanding and appreciation of the state of Yoga, which is also called *nirodha* or *samādhi*, one has to consider the entire psychic structure of man. There are, broadly speaking, two dimensions of consciousness, *citta*, the surface consciousness and the depth consciousness. The surface

1. *Rajastamomayī kila pramāṇādīvyūtiḥ sūttvikīm vṛttim upadāya samprajñāte niruddha, āsamprajñāte tu sarvāsām eva nirodha ityarthah.* ( *Tattvavaiśāradi* I. 1 ).



consciousness is constituted of the transformations of *citta*, of the stream of ideas. It manifests itself in the individuals in the states of waking and dream and lies buried in the states of deep sleep. Patañjali classifies all the innumerable transformations of *citta* under five heads, namely, right knowledge, wrong knowledge, imagination, sleep and memory<sup>1</sup>. This classification covers all the three states of waking, dream and deep sleep. The school of Patañjali also believes in the five levels, *bhūmis* of *citta*, namely, *kṣipta*, *mūḍha vikṣipta*, *ekāgra* and *niruddha*<sup>2</sup>. The first three *bhūmis* constitute the surface consciousness of man. In the state of *kṣipta*, *citta* is dominated by the principle of *rajas* and remains extremely restless and unstable. In the *mūḍha* state, *citta* is dominated by the principle of *tamas* and lacks discrimination. In its *vikṣipta* state, *citta* has in a greater measure the principle of *sattva*, *sattva-guṇa* and is thus to be distinguished from *kṣipta*. On account of the greater measure of *sattva-guṇa* as Viṣṇūanabhikṣu holds, it occasionally gets steady and concentrated. But this state does not last for long. Moved by *rajas*, *citta* repeatedly gets unsteady and restless and swings constantly from one object to another object<sup>3</sup>. Thus the mind of man remains subject to constant change. There is an automatic and unceasing flow of ideas, of the stream of consciousness. One is not necessarily constrained to accept the views of Patañjali and his school regarding the classification of the *citta vṛttis* and *citta bhūmis*. Some other schools of Indian philosophy and Yoga have developed other structures of *citta*. But one thing in which the different schools of Indian philosophy and Yoga find themselves in general agreement is that the surface or empirical consciousness of man which is constituted of the transformations of mind or the flux of ideas is conditioned by suffering, *duḥkha*. Man's

1. *Pramāṇa-viparyaya-vikalpa-nidrā-smṛtayaḥ*. ( Y. S. I. 6 ).

2. *Kṣiptam, mūḍham, vikṣiptam, ekāgram, niruddham iti cittasya bhūmayah*. ( Yoga-bhāṣya I. 1 ).

3. *Kṣiptād viṣiṣṭam vikṣiptam; sattvādbikyena samādadhad api cittam rajomātrayā'ntarāntarāvīṣayāntara-vṛttimad*.

( Yoga-vārttika I. 1 ).

*चित्ता*, according to Patañjali, is afflicted by five kinds of *kleśas*, namely, *avidyā*, *asmitā*, *rāga*, *dveṣa* and *abhiniveśa*<sup>1</sup>. *Avidyā* means taking the non-eternal, impure, painful and *anātman* as eternal, pure, pleasing and *ātman* respectively<sup>2</sup>. It constitutes a distorted vision, a wrong and perverted knowledge of things, *Asmitā* means *ahaṁkāra*, egoism. It is the result of the identification of *dr̥k*, *draṣṭā*, seer with *darśana*, *buddhi*, the instrument of knowledge<sup>3</sup>. In this state, one appropriates to himself all the qualities and modifications of *buddhi* and conceives oneself as lord, as enjoyer etc<sup>4</sup>. *Puruṣa* and *buddhi* are utterly different from each other. *Puruṣa* is *aparīṇāmin*, unchanging, *buddhi* is *parīṇāminī*, subject to change and modifications. *Puruṣa* is pure, conscious and completely detached. *Buddhi* is impure, unconscious, *jaḍa* and is subject to attachment. So the identification of *Puruṣa* with *buddhi* and other instruments of knowledge and with the objects of the world is not real, *pāramāṛthika*. It is due to primal ignorance *avidyā*. Thus *avidyā* is ontologically and logically anterior to *asmitā* and other *kleśas* and constitutes their source. The third *kleśa*, namely, *rāga* means desire or greed for pleasure. In this state, one gets attached to objects which provide him different kinds of enjoyment and constantly hankers after them. Even in the absence of objects, one may remain attached to pleasure by remembering it. This *tr̥ṣṇā*, desire for pleasure is inherent in man. It is a direct consequence of *asmitā*. It keeps man in the state of anxiety, fear, and all sorts of tensions etc. *Avidyā* and *tr̥ṣṇā*, according to Indian philosophy, constitute the main and fruitful source of human bondage. The opposite of *rāga* is *dveṣ*. It consists in the adverse reaction, the hostility and anger that one entertains towards pain and the objects that cause it. *Abhiniveśa* consists in constant clinging to life and its enjoyments and the fear of death. It is equally present in the learned

1. *Avidyāsmitā-rāga-dveṣābhiniveśa pañca kleśāḥ*. ( Y. S. II. 3 ).

2. *Anityāśuci-duḥkānātmasu nitya-śuci-sukhātmakhyātir avidyā*.  
( Y. S. II. 5 ).

3. *Puruṣo dr̥k-śaktir buddhir darśana-śaktir ityetayor eka-svarūpā-pattir ivāsmitā kleśa ucyate*. ( Yoga-bhāṣya II. 6 ).

4. *Īśvaro'ham ahaṁ bhogī---*,



as well as in the commonfolk. The desire to escape death is present in all the living beings. Man finds himself heading towards death and knows it as something inevitable. Yet he has an irrepressible desire to live and refuses to submit himself voluntarily and gracefully to death. This is the great contradiction in which human life is involved and it constitutes a perennial source of man's sufferings, *kleśas*.

Thus man's empirical existence is conditioned by suffering, *kleśas*. His psychic structure, *citta*, *buddhi*, ordinarily, operates under subjection to the different kinds of *kleśas*. It means that suffering is not something accidental to human life. It, on the other hand, conditions its every ontological and epistemological structure. Due to *avidyā* and other *kleśas*, man is not able to have real knowledge of himself, of the world and of the ultimate reality. He is not in possession of *jñāna*, *prajñā*. It is a common belief of Indian philosophers that the various *kleśas* put a serious limitation on man's knowledge. This is characterised as the state of bondage. In this state, human life remains subject to law of *karma* and the cycle of birth and death. Indian philosophers and yogins from the very dawn of history have shown a clear understanding and appreciation of man's existential situation—his subjection to *duḥkha*, to the operation of *karma* and the cycle of birth and death.

But man is not forever condemned to remain subject to finitude, suffering and death. He can rise above this state of bondage and attain the state of freedom. This is possible through Yoga. Yoga is the great way, the ancient Aryan Way to everlasting freedom, Bliss and Immortality.

# REVELATION : ITS MEANING, MODES AND POLARITY

R. S. Misra

Revelation constitutes the foundation of religion. It embodies the essential truths of religion. It removes the veil that separates man from the Divine. A religious man's faith in God, soul, immortality and the other supernatural truths and values of life is ultimately centred in revelation and is derived from it. This phenomenon is witnessed in every great religion and religious tradition.

## Meaning and Modes of Revelation

Now the question is, what is revelation? It may be conceived as that which imparts to man the knowledge of the Divine or the supreme Reality and also the knowledge about his own real existence, his relationship with the Divine, the supreme goal of his life and the way to attain it. This knowledge is essentially supernatural and it cannot be attained by man by any other means available to him. It is supposed to be embodied in the scriptures of different religions. Thus scriptures are books of revelation. One significant fact that is found in the different religions is that they do not regard their scriptures as having been composed by man. They are supposed to be revealed by God (Īśvara). The *Vedas* are supposed to have been revealed by Īśvara. The ṛṣis have received the eternal truths of Śruti from Īśvara. They have not created them or discovered them by their own efforts. Ācārya Śaṅkara says in his introduction to the *Bhagavad-gītā* that Bhagavān after creating the world and desirous of its well-being taught two kinds of Dharma as propounded in the *Vedas*, namely, *pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa* and *nivṛtti-lakṣaṇa* to ancient seers. The *pravṛtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma* (*karma-yoga*) was revealed to Prajāpatīs like Marīci, etc., and the *nivṛtti-lakṣaṇa-dharma* (*jñāna-yoga*) to the ṛṣis like Sanaka, Sanandana and others. Zoroastrianism and



the Semitic religions also believe that their scriptures have been revealed by God. The eternal truths propounded in these scriptures were communicated by God to prophets like Zārathustra, Moses, Muhammad and others. They simply received them. They were not their authors or creators. It is due to this very fact that the scriptures command unquestionable authority in different religions and religious traditions. They constitute the supreme source of religious knowledge.

But there are other modes of revelation as well. I propose to discuss here only one other important form of revelation which is known as intuition. It is a direct and immediate experience of Īśvara, the supreme Being or the supreme reality. It may also be characterized as the direct experience of self, ātman, puruṣa or of nirvāṇa. From this point of view, revelation may be understood as the direct manifestation or experience of the transcendent reality. This experience is attained by a yogi in the state of samādhi. But samādhi is possible only if the individual attains complete freedom from the distractions of mind. It is a widespread belief in the Indian religious or yogic traditions that mind can be completely silenced. Different methods are prescribed for the attainment of this supreme state. But one important fact that has to be noted in this connection is that each yoga prescribes a rigorous moral and spiritual discipline for one who aspires to attain samādhi and to have a direct experience of the Divine. It has always been conceived as a rare achievement. Though theoretically speaking, it is open to all, yet it is actually attained only by the very few. The state of samādhi, as it has been conceived in the Indian religious tradition, cannot be attained by the use of narcotics, or any other artificial means. It is also not the result of any mental abnormality or disorder. Thus samādhi has to be clearly distinguished from that kind of trance which is brought about by any artificial means or occurs due to disorders in the nervous system. The state of samādhi can be attained by man by his own sustained efforts or by a single-minded devotion to God and by His grace. But the perfect control of senses and mind, cultivation of detachment are its

prerequisites Thus in the state of meditation or samādhi, a man has an immediate experience or intuition of the Divine. In the other great religions also we have the traditions of mystics. They are supposed to have direct experience or revelation of God. While the ordinary man enjoys a living experience of God by believing in Him and having an unshakable faith in Him, the mystic or the yogi has a direct vision of Him and enjoys union with Him. A mystic is one who is detached from the world and is united with God. A true mystic who enjoys direct vision of God in the state of deep meditation or samādhi can be clearly distinguished from a pseudo-mystic who only pretends to have the vision of God. A pseudo-mystic necessarily lacks the quality of detachment. The world inevitably sticks to him. But a true mystic even while he lives in the world remains above it. He knows that he simply is in the world but he is not of the world.

Intuition or mystic experience has been taken in the different religious traditions as an extremely important form of revelation. The śruti (scripture) and Intuition are both revelation. The Śruti imparts to man the knowledge of the Divine, intuition enables him to have a direct vision of Him. Through Śruti, man hears about God, through intuition, he sees Him, has direct and immediate experience of Him. It is only after *śravaṇa* (hearing), that *manana* (reflection) and *nididhyāsana* (contemplation) can take place. Unless one receives the divine word of the Śruti from an enlightened teacher and ascertain its real meaning in respect of Brahman one cannot embark on the path of reflection and meditation. But for Śruti, man would never have been aware of the Divine Being and of his higher destiny. And in the absence of this saving knowledge, he cannot attain *Brahma-jñāna* or *brahma-sākṣātkāra*. Thus Śruti precedes intuition and constitutes its ground. In this respect, Śruti can be conceived as the original revelation of God. It is the revelation of Brahman in and through the word. Intuition can be characterized only as a dependent revelation. To say that intuition is ultimately dependent on Śruti or scriptural knowledge does not in any way



detract from its importance or value. It simply means that man cannot attain Brahma-jñāna by himself and in an unaided way. It is only in rare cases that Brahma-knowledge is attained without the aid of śāstra and guru. But there also the prior touch of the Divine cannot be denied. The main purpose of Śruti is to make man aware of the supreme Reality, the Divine Being, the Eternal and the Infinite that is seated within him and that pervades the whole universe and to awaken in him the desire and aspiration to realize It. This direct realization is attained through intuition. So Śruti and Intuition both serve as aids to man's realisation of the Infinite and Eternal within him. Intuition does not give us any new knowledge. It simply removes the veil that hides the Eternal seated within our hearts. It is the unfolding of the Infinite in the heart of the finite creature (jīva). In the real sense the Infinite is eternally revealed. The eternal knowledge is always there within man. Sri Aurobindo calls it the eternal Veda. But it remains unknown to man under the conditions of existence or finitude. So he stands in need of revelation to proceed on the divine path and realize his union with Brahman. "The supreme Shāstra of the integral Yoga is the eternal Veda secret in the heart of every thinking and living being. The lotus of the eternal knowledge and the eternal perfection is a bud closed and folded up within us. It opens swiftly or gradually, petal by petal, through successive realizations, once the mind of man begins to turn towards the eternal, once his heart, no longer compressed and confined by attachment to finite appearances, becomes enamoured in whatever degree of the Infinite"<sup>1</sup>

### Polarity In Revelation

Every revelation is conditioned by some sort of subjectivity. It cannot be taken as altogether objective and unconditional. It is a revelation only for those who have a desire and the capacity to receive it and who entertain faith in it. A scripture is a book

1. Sri Aurobindo: *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Sri Aurobindo Ashram, Pondicherry, 1967; P. 59.

of revelation only for those who have faith in it. The message of liberation embodied in a scripture has a meaning only for one who is desirous of it. Only such persons are supposed to possess the necessary qualifications to receive the message of the Śruti, and to proceed on the path of *mokṣa*<sup>1</sup>. A fact or event may be conceived as revelatory by some, while it may have no revelatory significance for others. The prophets of Israel interpreted certain historical and other events as symbolizing the intervention of God in history. In the same way we find numerous instances in Rāmāyaṇa, Mahābhārata and Purāṇas where different events have been conceived as symbolizing the victory of God over demonic and evil forces. These events may be interpreted differently by non-believers or by those belonging to other religious traditions. Hinduism and Christianity believe in Avatāra or Incarnation. It is according to them, the revelation of God in history. But there are some other great world-religions which do not admit the possibility of the descent of God in history and even consider this belief as blasphemous. Hinduism and Christianity also differ in some fundamental respects in their conception of the nature and role of Avatāra and Incarnation. The crucifixion and resurrection of Christ constitute the very foundation of Christianity as it symbolizes his complete conquest of evil and death. It is supposed to give perennial hope to man that if he follows the way of Christ, he is destined to conquer evil and death. But the phenomenon of resurrection of Christ may be explained quite differently, say, by the specialists in psychical research. The belief in resurrection which occupies a place of great importance in some world-religions is not shared by Indian religions. Thus the world-religions have serious and fundamental differences in respect of their beliefs in revelation and the revelatory phenomena. Each great religion is based on its own revelation. It explains the various phenomena of revelation in its own way. There is no doctrine, fact or event which is or which can be universally regarded as revelatory. It cannot be taken as absolutely objective and unconditional.

1. Śravaṇādīṣu ca munakṣāṇāmadhikārah. Vedānti-paribhāṣā.



Thus every revelation or revelatory phenomenon is fraught with subjectivity. It is always a revelation for a certain class or category of believers. It necessarily involves a polarity, the polarity between the content of revelation and the subject who receives it or experiences it. The subject not only receives revelation but he also interprets it and makes his own contribution to it. Man receives revelation under the conditions of his own existence. Everyone, whether he happens to be a seer, a prophet or a mystic, is conditioned in some way or the other by finitude. He is also conditioned by his tradition, culture, language, environment, education and so on. So every revelation is received by man under these conditions and it necessarily undergoes modification and even distortion. It is interpreted by man in accordance with the conditions of his own existence. It applies to every revelation whether it is given through the word or event or mystic experience. Thus every revelation becomes a conditioned revelation. It is always conditioned by man's existential situation. This fact introduces an element of subjectivity and relativity in every revelation.

Revelations differ from each other not only in respect of their form but also in respect of their content. They are expressed through different languages, idioms, symbols, etc. and different myths and stories are associated with them. These constitute the form of revelation. But every revelation possesses a content which expresses itself through these forms or is clothed in them. The content is not always the same for every revelation. The content of revelation is constituted of the truths that it embodies or reveals. These truths are not necessarily common to all revelations. There are some truths e.g. some moral values, the idea of holiness, the idea of liberation, etc., which form the content of every revelation. But there are other important and fundamental truths of a revelation which are not shared by other revelations. We find some radical difference between the contents of the *Vedas* and the Bible. This is equally true of other scriptures as well.

But it does not mean that all revelations remain always in a state of conflict and tension with each other and there is

no meeting ground between them. In spite of their divergences, they also converge on some point and that is the transcendent reality itself. It constitutes the ultimate content of every revelation. Every revelation ultimately serves as a pointer to it. The moment it tries to apprehend it or embody it in words, it gets conditioned. The supreme or the transcendent Reality is absolute and unconditioned. But its revelation is necessarily conditioned. The revelation of the Unconditioned is not an unconditioned revelation. This constitutes the supreme truth of every revelation and every religion. Its proper appreciation and realization alone can provide the necessary atmosphere for a meaningful and fruitful dialogue between religions.

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## RELIGION, REALITY AND TRUTH

R S. Misra

Religion at its deepest level can be conceived as the revelation of Reality or the Unconditioned. It also reveals to man the Way to the supreme Reality and to the supreme goal of his life. The supreme truth or truths of religion are supposed to be *revealed* to man. They are received and discovered by him. They are not created by him. They cannot be rightly conceived as the projections of man's unconscious or the expressions of his feelings and emotions or the figment of his imagination. They are not merely subjective in nature. They have a decidedly objective reference. They point to a reality which transcends human mind, which lies beyond man and the world and yet pervades their existence. The great religions of the world are centred in the ultimate Reality and they make serious and sustained attempts to reveal its nature and structure.

### Reality in the Perspective of World Religions

But one is confronted with a serious difficulty when one tries to look at the ultimate Reality in the perspective of the great world religions. It is due to the fact that the different religions give different and even conflicting accounts of the nature and structure of Reality. Their concepts of God, man, soul or spirit, world, creation, freedom, destiny of man, etc. sometimes differ in a radical way from each other. There are some religions, namely, Hinduism, Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity, Islam and Sikhism which are centred in God. There are other religions, namely, Buddhism, Jainism and Taoism which are not only not centred in God but which have no place for God at all in their metaphysical framework or in their scheme of life. *Nirvāṇa* constitutes the central reality of Buddhism and the impersonal Tao of Taoism. The deeper truths of Jainism are also explained without any reference to

God. Thus these religions reveal the deepest truths of man's life and reality without any reference to a supreme Being or a transcendent Reality, called God. In this respect they present a sharp contrast to the religions which are absolutely centred in God and which cannot explain the nature and structure of reality and man's life and destiny apart from him. Even the God-centred religions present a marked contrast to each other in respect of their ideas of God and of the relation of man and the world to Him. It is true that there are certain characteristics or attributes which are more or less common to the idea of God as developed in different religions. For example, God is conceived in them as Infinite, self-existent, omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent, Personal and as Creator of man and the world etc. But in certain other respects the ideas of God of different religions differ in a radical way. While Yahweh and Allah are conceived as strictly one without a second in Judaism and Islam respectively, God in Christianity is conceived in the form of Trinity consisting of God the Father, Son and the Holy Spirit. Zarathustra, the founder of Zoroastrianism, gives a different account of his God, called Ahura Mazda. Ahura Mazda finds himself confronted by his great adversary Angra Mainyu who is the arch demon and the very embodiment of evil. They are seen to be engaged in a deadly war which takes place on a cosmic scale and continues till the end of time. Finally Ahura Mazda is able to vanquish Angra Mainyu and his hordes and establish his undisputed reign over the world which is transformed into the divine kingdom. Thus evil poses a serious challenge to Ahura Mazda but not to Yahweh or Allah. In Christianity, though evil does not pose any challenge to God the Father, yet it claims the precious life of His Son who makes a descent into the world as Jesus Christ. Evil in the form of man's original sin is cancelled only by the supreme sacrifice of Jesus Christ at the Cross.

The Hindu view of God differs in certain essential respects from that of the Zoroastrian as well as the Semitic views. In the Vedic tradition, God is conceived both as the impersonal



Absolute, *Sat*, *Brahman*, or *Saccidānanda* and as the personal and the supreme Being, *Puruṣottama*, or *Īśvara*. Even the *Saguṇa Brahman* or *Īśvara* is conceived in different ways as *Śiva*, *Viṣṇu*, *Śakti*, etc. Another significant feature of the Hindu view of God is that His reality is not established by denying the reality of many gods, the *devas*. Hinduism believes in *Brahman* or *Īśvara* and in a variety of forms of *Īśvara* and also in the plurality of *devas* or *devatās*. Thus Hinduism taken as a whole cannot, strictly speaking, be characterised either as monism or monotheism or henotheism or poly-theism. The Hindu view does not find itself constrained to deny the reality of *devatās* (gods) as has been said above in order to proclaim the reality of one Godhead or *Īśvara*. Thus it differs in a radical way from the Semitic views which conceive the denial of the reality of many gods as a necessary prerequisite of affirming the reality of One Godhead. It is this understanding of the ultimate Reality or Godhead that has saved Hinduism from indulging in the horrors of iconoclasm that has constituted the bane of some great world religions.

The world religions also show radical differences in their understanding and interpretation of man and the world, creation and the destiny of man. Whereas according to the Hindu view, the world is created or manifested by God or *Brahman* out of Himself, according to the Semitic religions, it is created by God out of nothing. The Hindu view conceives self or *ātman* as uncreated and immortal. Judaism, Christianity and Islam believe in the creation of soul though they also conceive it as immortal. Buddhism does not simply believe in the reality of *ātman*. Indian religions believe in the doctrine of rebirth. Man, according to them, has a long history behind him; so long as he is subject to *avidyā* and *karma*, he is born again and again in the spatio-temporal world and is thus involved in the cycle of birth and death. But according to the Zoroastrian and Semitic religions, man is born only once in this world. He has no past though he has a distinct future. He enjoys rebirth only in the world beyond which is not conditioned by Time and Death. Thus the doctrine of rebirth

which constitutes the cardinal principle of the Indian religions is completely foreign to the Zoroastrian and the Semitic religions. The idea of resurrection, the rising of the dead to life and the ultimate reunion of soul and body of man constitutes a central doctrine of Semitic religions and also of Zoroastrianism, but it finds no place in the Indian and Chinese religions. Hinduism believes in the cyclic view of history, but according to the Zoroastrian and the Semitic religions, history is moving towards God, towards a state of perfection which will be attained when time comes to an end along with this world and the kingdom of God finally comes into existence.

Thus we find that the great religions present a bewildering variety of views concerning Reality, concerning man, the world and the Transcendent. Their views are also seen to come in direct clash with each other. The religions which affirm the reality of God and those which deny it certainly seem to have nothing in common and contradict each other. If one view in respect of God is true, the other must necessarily be false. In the same way if the religious proposition that the self is uncreated is true, the other proposition that it is created must be false and *vice versa*. Likewise if the world is conceived as created by God out of nothing, it cannot be taken as manifested by God out of Himself. The two views come in direct conflict with each other and both cannot be true, though both may happen to be false in the sense that the world may not be conceived as created at all. Thus there seems to be no way of reconciling the fundamental views or doctrines of different world religions concerning man, world and the ultimate Reality.

This situation poses a serious problem before the students of world Religions or Comparative Religion. It raises a basic question concerning the validity of the religious views.

### **Religious Views and their Validity**

So far as the different religions are concerned, they claim absolute validity for their views concerning Reality. For them they are not simply concepts or ideas that are formulated by



man at the level of reflection; they are the *truths* that are *revealed* to him at the supra-sensuous and supra-reflectonal level. They are the truths of revelation; they are not created by man's reason or derived from his sense-experience. The meaning of revelation is not the same for all religions. According to God-centred religions, the truths that are revealed to man come from the supernatural source, from the Divine Being himself. The revealer of the supernatural truths is God himself. In the prophetic religions, God is believed to have revealed the supernatural truths or knowledge about man, the world and Himself to his chosen prophets like Zarathustra, Moses, Muhammad and others. In Christianity, revelation comes through Jesus Christ who is believed to be the Incarnation of God. The prophets play the role of messengers of God. They communicate the message of God to men. This revelation of the Divine and his message constitutes the basis of all prophetic religions and is embodied in their scriptures. Thus religion, according to this view, has a supernatural origin. It comes ultimately from God. It is not created by man.

The supernatural origin of religion, *dharma* is also accepted by Hinduism. There are two main views concerning Revelation in Hinduism. According to one view, the *Vedas* are eternal. They are not created or composed by any being, human or Divine. It is the *Vedas* which reveal the mystery of *Dharma* to man. According to another view, the *Vedas* are uttered or revealed by *Īśvara*. They are revealed by *Īśvara* to the seers *ṛṣis*. The seers have a direct vision of Reality and receive the truths of *Dharma* from *Īśvara* himself. They are not their authors or creators. Thus *Dharma* ultimately comes from *Īśvara*. It is eternal, *sanātana* and not the creation of human mind. It is centred in *Īśvara* and not in man.

In Buddhism, revelation is understood in an entirely different way. Buddha does not claim to have received supernatural truths or revelation from any divine being or God. He perceived those truths on the attainment of *Bodhi* or Enlightenment.

ment. Buddha is the revealer of the supernatural truths and *dharma*. He is not their creator.

It is necessary here to make a distinction between revelation and intuition. We have to make this distinction in the light of God-centred religions as well as Buddhism. According to the former, as has been stated above, revelation consists of the knowledge of the Reality and of *Dharma* which comes from the Beyond, from the Divine Being himself. But intuition is the knowledge of Reality that is attained by man either by his own efforts or by the grace of the Divine. Revelation is imparted by God to his chosen prophets and seers, *ṛṣis*. Intuition, as it is understood in the Indian religious tradition, is possible to any one who by acquiring purity of mind and body is in a position to transcend the limitations of sense-experience and reason. It is possible only to a really holy man. Thus one can attain the status of a mystic, a saint or a *yogi*, but not that of a *ṛṣi* or a prophet or Incarnation, *Avatāra*. Revelation commands authority. It is conceived as the only valid source of knowledge, *pramāṇa* for the transcendental Reality and *Dharma*. This authority cannot be appropriated by any human being, howsoever enlightened he might be. The validity of man's intuitive knowledge is ultimately guaranteed by Revelation which commands unquestioned authority in every religious tradition as it is conceived as infallible. This unquestioned authority is also commanded by Buddha in the Buddhist tradition, though he attained *Bodhi* by himself and did not receive it from any higher divine Being. Though any holy man, who fulfils the requisite qualifications, can attain intuitive knowledge, *prajñā* and realise the mystery of *nirvāṇa*, yet he cannot be assigned the authority of Buddha. Buddha's Enlightenment and teachings alone are given the status of Revelation in the Buddhist tradition.

Thus one thing that we find in common in all the great religions and religious traditions is that they are all based on Revelation and conceive it as the only infallible source of knowledge of the transcendental Reality and the mysteries of



*Dharma*. The question regarding the validity of religious views or ideas is answered by making an appeal to Revelation. It alone provides an absolute criterion for judging the validity of doctrines propounded by different religious traditions. If they are based on Revelation and are consistent with it, they are to be accepted, otherwise they are to be summarily rejected. We find it clearly demonstrated in the theologies of different religions. The theologians take great pains to show that their views are entirely based on scriptures and are in complete agreement with them. Their main function is to give a faithful, systematic and coherent interpretation of scriptures and other authoritative texts and of the doctrines, dogmas, rituals, etc. of their respective religious traditions. They do not enjoy freedom to question their truths. Thus the question concerning the validity of scriptural or revelatory truths does not bother the votaries of respective religious traditions as they are not supposed to entertain any doubt about them.

The difficulty arises only when the theologians and religious philosophers of one tradition are confronted with those of other traditions, as each tradition claims to have its own revelation which is to be taken as absolute and final. In this situation, the only way left for them is to show on grounds of reason and experience that their own doctrines are true and the doctrines entertained by their opponents are either self-contradictory and false or they are simply partially true. Thus the claim to infallibility of revelation of one tradition is questioned by the votaries of other traditions. Even in the same religious tradition, serious doctrinal differences arise among the votaries of different sects or *sampradāyas*.

Thus the weakness inherent in the claim concerning the absolute validity and infallibility of revelation is exposed when one revelation is confronted by its opposite or when there are conflicting and contradictory interpretations of the doctrines or truths of the same revelation. This weakness may not be realised or appreciated by theologians or by those who keep themselves confined to their own religion and are either hostile

to or indifferent towards other religions. But for a student of world religions, it raises a serious question. This question is concerned, as I have pointed out earlier, with the validity of religious doctrines. There seems to be no way left to judge their validity if the authenticity of revelation on which they are based is itself questioned.

In this situation it is quite easy and natural for a thinker, who looks at religion from *outside* to come to the conclusion that all the revelations are fallible and even false and that the claim for their supernatural or divine origin is spurious. But one who tries to look at religion from *within* feels constrained to arrive at a different conclusion altogether. A serious and sympathetic study of the World Religions brings home to one a deeper and most significant truth about them. It is that in spite of the amazing diversity of religious views concerning Reality and the apparently contradictory nature of revelations, there is one thing of supreme importance where all the great religions find themselves in agreement. They all *reveal* a Reality which is infinite, self-existent and eternal and transcends the bounds of space and time. They present different and even conflicting views of the transcendent Reality. But they all agree in accepting it. So it is the different views of the Transcendent that can be questioned. The reality of the Transcendent itself cannot legitimately be questioned. This constitutes the deeper and essential truth of the great World Religions. They all point to the Transcendent and are centred in it. This is the truth that cannot be understood and appreciated by one who makes a merely external and theoretical approach to religion.

A legitimate question may be asked here, if all religions point to the transcendent Reality and ultimately reveal its nature, why do they differ in their conceptions of Reality or in their world-views. How is it that there are different revelations of the same Reality? If Reality is one and the same, how is it apprehended in different ways by different religions?



### Revelation, Interpretation and Truth

The reason for the diversity of revelations of Reality or of the different conceptions of It seems to be inherent in the existential situation of man. In every revelation of Reality, it is man who receives it or who perceives it. And he not only *receives* it but also *shapes* it. He also contributes something to it. He makes his own response to it. And in this process the original experience of Reality undergoes some sort of modification. Man is endowed with a particular psychic structure and he is conditioned by his finitude. So when he has some experience or when he knows something, it is conditioned by his psychic structure and his finitude. It means that it is shaped and modified in accordance with the psychic structure of man and his other finite conditions. Thus every act of knowledge or experience involves an element of construction. This element of construction is involved even in every act of sense-experience, though its truth is realised not at the sensory level but only at the level of reflection. This is also true of the transcendental experience or revelations. Even these supreme religious experiences involve an element of construction. This is not only true of the experiences of mystics, saints and *yogis*, but also of the great seers, *ṛṣis* and prophets who are considered by the great religions as the recipients of revelation and endowed with the authority to communicate it to men.

The truth of this statement becomes obvious in the case of revelations which are supposed to take place in the form of communication, the communication of the message or words of God to prophets or seers. God is supposed to speak to them not in some transcendental language but in their own language, the language which they understand and speak. It really means that the message which is supposed to be communicated by God to his chosen men is received by them under the conditions of their own historical and finite existence and is interpreted accordingly.

But this conditioning of experience can be noticed even where the very being of God or the transcendent Reality is

revealed to man, to the seers, prophets and other spiritually advanced men. This supreme experience or revelation of Reality is possible to man, it is generally admitted, when he transcends by his own spiritual efforts or by the Divine grace, the limitations of his sense-experience and reason and other finite conditions. It is a widely accepted belief in the Indian spiritual traditions that man is possessed of the capacity to transcend his psychic structure constituted of his cognitions, feelings, emotions, memory, imagination, will, ego, etc., and attain a state of consciousness, *jñāna*, *prājñā*, where he can realise unity or union with the transcendent Reality. This is to be attained by following a well regulated way of spiritual life called *Yoga*. Thus a direct and immediate experience of the transcendent Reality or the Unconditioned is possible to man only when he rises above the conditioning of his sense-experience and thought.

While I admit that it is possible for a spiritually advanced man, be he a mystic, a *Yogi* or a prophet, to transcend the level of sense-experience and reason and attain a higher state of consciousness where he can have a direct and living experience of the supreme Reality, I do not think that it is possible for any individual at the present stage of his evolution to transcend completely his finitude. Even the highest spiritual experiences or revelations that come to the great seers, mystics and prophets seem to be conditioned, as I have pointed out earlier, by their particular psychic structures, their finitude and their historical existence. A direct and immediate experience of the Divine or the transcendent Reality is possible. But an unconditioned experience of it is not possible to an embodied spirit. Experience of the Unconditioned cannot itself be taken as unconditioned. It is in some way relative to man's existential situation. It is due to this fact that the Transcendent is experienced by some as the Personal God, by others as the impersonal Absolute and by some others as *Nirvāṇa* and so on. Even when a man is supposed to have attained a state of non-dual consciousness where he enjoys complete unity with the



impersonal Reality or the Absolute, he cannot be said to be absolutely free from his conditioned existence. His experience cannot be taken as absolute and unconditioned. It is evident from the fact that he does not have integral experience of the Absolute. His experience of the Absolute confines it to one poise or aspect. It does not take into account the many other potent, rich and soul-shaking experiences of the supreme Reality which are reported by other great mystics, seers and prophets belonging to different times and climes.

Thus it is evident that every revelation, every experience of Reality involves an element of construction or interpretation. This act of interpretation takes place even at the highest spiritual level when the spirit of the individual enjoys close union with the Divine and not only at the level of mind or speech. This is evidenced from the different formulations of those experiences in language. It is not possible that all the spiritual men experience the Divine or the supreme Reality in the same way and only differ in its different formulations or expressions in terms of thought and speech. These differences cannot be explained unless they had direct and immediate experience of the transcendent Reality itself in different ways.

Another explanation for the diversity of revelations or of supreme spiritual experiences may also be given in the light of God-centred religions. If the supreme Reality is conceived as a Personal God, then it is not possible for all the individuals to know Him in the same way. God cannot be taken as an object which lies before us. He is conceived as a Person and the relation between man and God signifies the relationship between two persons. So it is not only man who makes response to God; it is the Divine Himself who comes to man. The *Upaniṣads* say that *Brahman* is attained only by one whom He chooses. This faith is shared by all the religions which believe in God and are centred in Him. One can give hundreds of instances from the scriptures of the great God-centred religions to illustrate the truth that it is God Himself who reaches man and awakens him to Light and Truth. Sri Aurobindo says

that before man chooses God, he is already chosen by Him. So if God chooses men and brings them close to Himself, then He may meet them in different ways. But even in this close and intimate relationship between two persons or two subjects, the fact that man makes response to the Divine under his own existential situation and interprets Him accordingly cannot be gainsaid.

A revelation or spiritual experience is subjected to further conditioning and interpretation when it is expressed through language. There the living experience of a transcendent Reality has to be formulated in concepts and words and through symbols, myths, etc., and is thus conditioned by them. The main difficulty involved in a religious language is that here the transcendental experiences have to be described and articulated through the words which are primarily meant for secular use. The words like great, good, loving, terrible, fascinating, just, merciful and so on which are primarily meant to describe the nature of objects and persons are pressed into service to describe the nature of the transcendent Reality or God. They make an attempt to describe a Reality which transcends all speech and thought and is essentially ineffable. Thus all the religious assertions of the Transcendent can only serve as pointers to it; they cannot succeed in comprehending its real nature. Most of the religious statements are symbolic in nature. Paul Tillich goes to the extent of saying that all religious statements about God are symbolic. The only nonsymbolic statement is that God is being-itself or the absolute. In view of the limitations of religious language, some religious philosophers reject all the positive and concrete descriptions of the supreme Reality and attempt to describe It only negatively. But a purely negative description of Reality may fascinate a certain class of philosophers, but It may cease to be a living Reality for the ordinary mortals. Thus both the positive and negative descriptions of Reality suffer from inherent shortcomings. The positive and concrete descriptions tend to bring down the Infinite to the level



of the finite and the negative descriptions tend to reduce It to some sort of abstraction, at least for a large majority of mankind.

But at the empirical level, it is not possible to dispense with the use of language altogether to comprehend Reality. Though the Transcendent is beyond man's sense-experience, speech and thought, yet It has to be approached by him only through them. It is only through these finite means, howsoever inadequate they may be, that man can approach the Infinite. *Paramārtha* or the transcendental truth cannot be taught according to Nāgārjuna, without taking recourse to *vyavahāra*, the empirical phenomena. Thus religious language, in spite of all its limitations and inadequacies, serves a necessary function inasmuch as it provides a ladder by which one can reach the Divine. It is with this end in view that the mystics; saints and prophets all over the world have described their experiences of God and religious philosophers have tried to formulate definite concepts and views about him, though they fully realised the wisdom of maintaining complete silence. This practice has been followed even by non-religious philosophers. Even Wittgenstein had to speak a lot in order to communicate the truth of silence.

But if the descriptions of the Divine and the concepts and doctrines formulated about Him are themselves taken as constituting the supreme truths, then religion is faced with a desperate and distressing situation. Different religions have developed different and even contradictory views and concepts about the supreme Being and about man and the world, as I have demonstrated earlier, and thus come into direct conflict with one another. The votaries of these religions lose sight of the essential truths of the Divine and engage themselves in unending conflicts over their [ doctrines and dogmas which are mostly symbolic in character and are developed and put into rigid and inflexible forms only in the course of time and cannot really claim any infallibility and authority about them. They generally have a tendency to stick as tenaciously to the different worldviews propounded in their respective religious traditions as to their belief in God or the Trans-

endent. This has resulted in certain disastrous consequences for the great religions. On the one hand, they are engaged in incessant fight against each other and, on the other hand, they have come into direct clash with modern science. The obstinate and pathetic attempt made by Christianity to maintain its own world-view against the momentous discoveries of science has brought it not only into disrepute but has also shaken faith of a good number of western intellectuals in it. It has also given a serious jolt to the intellectuals all over the world and has shaken their faith in religion as such.

So the great religions today are faced with a serious task. They have to make a clear-cut distinction between what is essential and what is accidental in them. The essential truths of religion have to be clearly distinguished from all other accidental expressions and manifestations that have emerged and taken definite shape in the course of time. They have to be distinguished from the doctrines, dogmas, beliefs, rituals, myths, etc., which, though they occupy an important and essential place in all religions, yet they constitute only the surface of religion and not its depth. The main content of religion is the supreme Reality or God. Its main function is to reveal it and also to show to man the way to realise it, to bring himself into living relation with it. It constitutes the essential and the deepest truth of religion, the depth of religion. All the great religions are in complete agreement insofar as they reveal the supreme Reality, which transcends man and the world, yet pervades them and brings them into direct relationship with it, though they symbolize it in different ways. A true philosophy of religion may not accept the different worldviews of religion, but it has to accept the reality of the Transcendent and of the direct relation of man and the world to It. The existence of man and the world cannot be ultimately and finally explained apart from their relationship with the Divine. This is the one supreme truth that is accepted and advocated by all religions in a direct and unambiguous way. But so far as the problems concerning the creation of the world and man and the ways of their



relationship with the Divine etc., which constitute their different world-views, are concerned they differ from each other and sometimes in a radical way as I have shown earlier. These differences cannot affect the essential truth of religion. They only provide necessary structure and the means through which one can reach the Infinite. Their main function in religion is to act as pointers to it.

Thus the supreme truth of Religion lies in the revelation of the Divine and the deep mystery of human life. A serious and sympathetic study of the great religions can enable one to realise and appreciate this truth. It will only strengthen one's faith in God or the Absolute. It cannot weaken it.

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# RELIGION AND HUMAN UNITY

R. S. Misra

## I

Religion has played a tremendous rôle in moulding and transforming the life of the individuals, the social groups, and of nations from the dawn of history. It has acted as a powerful force in bringing about the moral and spiritual regeneration and elevation of human society and in effecting unity, solidarity and integration among the peoples of different races and cultures. In this respect, religion has been a boon to mankind. But there is also another side of religion which contains powerful negative and destructive elements. In certain periods of history, religion has been used by ecclesiastical authorities, social institutions and political powers in the different parts of the world for the exploitation and persecution of people, denying them their basic rights and freedom, and has thus brought untold suffering to them. Instead of giving life, light, freedom and joy to people, it has often acted as an instrument of evil, death and destruction. This fact makes it all the more necessary to take religion seriously and have an objective assessment of its positive, creative and constructive as well as its negative and destructive elements. We have to concentrate our attention on those moral and spiritual dimensions of religion which have produced the noblest and the most cherished human values, have made human life meaningful and have generated in the individuals and the social groups an abiding sense of unity and fellow-feeling. It is very often a misunderstanding and ignorance of the deeper truths and values of religion which generates narrow-mindedness, egoism and fanaticism among its adherents. In order to entertain love and pride for their own religion, they often find it necessary to develop an attitude of hatred and contempt for other religions. This situation creates artificial barriers among peoples of different



faiths and of different religious denominations and keeps them mentally apart from each other, and thus thwarts all the efforts towards their unity and integration. So a clear understanding of deeper and perennial truths and values of religion and its real function in life is necessary in order to develop sympathetic, positive and constructive attitude among people belonging to different religions and religious denominations and promote love, fellow-feeling and a living sense of unity among them. This is specially necessary and requires some sort of urgency in the case of a country like India, and the world at large.

## II

India enjoys a unique status and importance among the nations of the world in the realm of religion. It happens to be the home of practically all the living religions. It has given birth to four great religions, namely, Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism and Sikhism and the four other great religions, namely Zoroastrianism, Judaism, Christianity and Islam have also found in India their second home. All these religions have made their substantial contribution to the enrichment and all round development of the cultural heritage of India and of its ancient civilization. They enjoy a peaceful co-existence to-day. But in spite of that, they continue more or less to lead an isolated existence. In recent years, some concerted efforts have been made at different levels, specially at the national level, to end the long era of isolation and indifference, and bring the peoples of different faiths closer to each other. As a result, there is taking place a significant change in their attitude and outlook. There is now in evidence a growing realisation of the need to entertain and develop a sympathetic, liberal and appreciative attitude and outlook towards other religions and faiths. We also now see here and there the happy phenomena of the people of different religious denominations and faiths showing enthusiasm and interest in each others' festivals and other religious and social activities and ceremonies, and actively participating in them. It is a most welcome and promising development and it can reasonably be hoped that there will be

greater and more unfettered and lively mingling and participation of the adherents of different religious faiths on such occasions in the years to come. It is sure to bring about a radical and desired change in the religious atmosphere of this land and will go a long way in promoting the cause of national unity and integration.

But this is not enough. It is now necessary to make people aware of the truths of their own religion as well as of other religions and the underlying unity between them. It is generally seen that even when one has a sufficiently good understanding of one's own religion one is either not at all aware of the deeper truths of other religions or possesses a very inadequate and insufficient knowledge of them. It also sometimes happens that people are given a distorted and derogatory picture of the religious faiths other than their own by their theologians and the religious propagandists. They are also, on the other hand, given a highly exaggerated and hyperbolic account of the glories, grandeur and perfection of their own religion by these interested persons. Thus, a good deal of misunderstanding, confusion and arrogance dominate the religious consciousness of people. Truth is found to be inextricably mixed with falsehood. Man is enslaved in the name of freedom. He is kept in ignorance and made to entertain even untruths and superstitions in the name of divine authority and revelation. God who is supposed to be infinite and timeless in the different God-centred religions, is sought to be confined and imprisoned within the narrow limits of doctrine and dogmas, myths, and rituals and a host of other beliefs. These constitute some of the pitfalls of religion, of all the religions. They have to be avoided at all costs if religion is to promote the welfare of human society as a whole.

### III

Religion essentially serves a three-fold function. Firstly, it reveals a reality which is conceived as infinite, eternal, timeless and transcendent, and as constituting the supreme goal of human life. Secondly, it lays down the way to attain that reality. Thirdly, it brings about the qualitative change in human life and enriches it morally and spiritually. All the developed religions have per-



formed this three-fold function in the course of their history. In this respect, all these religions may be said to have certain common features which constitute their fundamental and essential truth. These constitute the internal and deeper structures of religion. They may also be conceived as its universal structures. Thus, all the great or developed religions enjoy unity at a deeper level.

Another feature that is common to all religions is the idea of the sacred. This idea or the feeling of the sacred not only occupies a place of supreme importance in the higher religions but in the tribal religions as well. The distinction between the sacred and the profane is common to all religions and constitutes an essential and inseparable feature of the religious consciousness. The religious man becomes aware of the sacred as something wholly or basically different from the profane. The sacred is reality that belongs to a wholly different order, though it may manifest itself in objects that form a part of our natural or empirical world. Every act of manifestation of the sacred represents a paradox. As Eliade observes, "it is impossible to over-emphasize the paradox represented by every hierophany, even the most elementary. By manifesting the sacred, any object becomes *something* else, yet it continues to participate in its surrounding cosmic milieu. A *sacred* stone remains a *stone*: apparently (or, more precisely, from the prophane point of view), nothing distinguishes it from all other stones. But for those to whom a stone reveals itself as sacred, its immediate reality is transmuted into a supernatural reality. In other words, for those who have a religious experience, all nature is capable of revealing itself as cosmic sacrality. The cosmos in its entirety can become a hierophany".<sup>1</sup> Thus, the idea of the sacred is shared by all the religions and constitutes their distinguishing feature. It is true that different religions have different notions of the sacred as they have different notions of the supreme being, soul, liberation, the way to liberation, and also differ in a radical way from each other in respect of their myths, symbols, rituals, sacraments, beliefs, dogmas etc. But the idea of the sacred itself

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1. Mircea Eliade: *The Sacred and the Profane*: New York, Harper & Brothers, P-12.

provides a link of unity among them and distinguishes them from every thing that may be conceived as nonreligious or profane. In the same way, even radical differences in respect of doctrines, dogmas, myths, rituals, sacraments etc., do not affect the essential unity of religions in spite of the loud protestations of the militant theologians and propagandists belonging to different religious camps.

#### IV

My purpose here is not to deny or ignore the divergences or radical differences that exist between different religions. I also do not intend to deny that every religion has some uniqueness about it. It has some notable features of its own which distinguish it from other religions. But this fact does not deprive religions of their basic and essential unity which manifests itself in their universal structures and their striking agreements in respect of ideals and values of life and the fundamental religious experience. Radhakrishnan boldly declares that "When we enter the world of ideals the differences among religions become negligible and the agreements striking." The innumerable variety and differences that we find in religions in respects of their doctrines, dogmas, rituals, ways of worship, prayer etc., constitute the exterior structures or external forms of religion. Every religion develops these structures in the course of its history and they constitute the medium through which man approaches the Divine or the sacred and leads a meaningful life in the world. But these external structures or forms of religions are not permanent; they undergo changes in the different periods of history and the meaning of religion also changes along with them. These structures are brought into existence, grow and develop due to certain historical reasons and bear a definite impact on the social, economic, political and other cultural forces that operate in the different periods of history. They also undergo change from time to time largely under the pressure of these very forces. A religion is confronted with crisis when it obstinately tries to retain even those of its external forms which have lost their relevance to the individual and society at a



particular period of time or history. This kind of obduracy and conservatism on the part of religions also leads to their decline and fall as they practically cease to inspire people and ennoble their life morally and spiritually. All the religions to-day are confronted with this situation. Modern man's revolt against religion is not so much against its deeper truths and values as against its external forms and structures which are represented by some intellectual dogma, a cult, a church, a set of ceremonial forms, a rigid moral code or some religio-political or religio-social system. This is called religionism. Religionism in some form or other does constitute an essential aspect of every religion and the latter plays a meaningful role in the life of the individual and society only when its depth consisting of the deeper truths and values remains transparent and is not obscured and distorted by the spirit of religionism. Religionism does not constitute the essential truth of a religion though it serves as medium to attain it. The truth of religion consists in the revelation of the spirit and the divine. It is a living experience of the divine and the sacred within us and outside of us. "True religion", according to Srī Aurobindo, is "spiritual religion", that which seeks to live in spirit in what is beyond intellect, beyond the aesthetic and ethical and practical being of man, and to inform and govern these members of our being by the higher light and law of the spirit".<sup>1</sup>

It is the religion of the spirit that enables man to have a living experience of the Divine or a living encounter with Him that can make an appeal to the modern man and not the institutionalized religion that is over-burdened with all sorts of doctrines and dogmas and constrains man to accept them unquestionably. Every great religion has this spiritual dimension with it and can provide meaning to man's life to-day in the same way as it has done in the past ages. It will cease to be relevant to the life of the modern man if it loses touch with that inexhaustible source of life and light, freedom and peace. Speaking:

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1. *The Human Cycle*, First Edition, 1949, p. 220

of Christianity, Zaehner says, "God knows that the Christian Religion needs re-presenting to a world for which its traditional doctrines no longer have any meaning whatsoever. Let us not deceive ourselves. For the common man, in the protestant countries at least, the Christian religion has no longer any meaning or relevance to life as it is lived to-day. It is a game played by theologians. The world shrugs its shoulders and passes by on the other side."<sup>1</sup>

The truth of religion lies in living it and not in entertaining a set of beliefs concerning the mysteries of existence and the goal of life. It is religion alone that unites man with the depth of his being, with the deeper dimension of his existence. Modern man has become a one-dimensional creature. His whole existence is confined to the surface of his being and he is completely unaware of and estranged from its depth. It has resulted in the loss of integration of his personality. He seems to be condemned to lead a fragmentary existence and be constantly subjected to all sorts of anxieties, fear, uncertainty etc., He possesses everything today, excepting the peace of mind. It is this situation that is drawing people, young and old more to the way of yoga. The individual can attain peace of mind and integration of his personality only if he opens himself to the depth of his being, to the super-conscious dimensions of his existence that lie within him. This constitutes the perennial message of religion, of all the great religions; though they take recourse to different means of its communication.

So the world needs today a clear understanding and appreciation of the true nature of religion and its relevance to human life, individually and collectively. We do not need a universal religion but we do require a deep understanding and a living experience of the *universal* that constitutes the reality, truth and the supreme value of every higher religion. I do not conceive the possibility of the emergence of any universal religion in the near or distant future. It is simply a myth. Any such religion

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1. R.C. Zaehner, *Concordant Discord*, Oxford University Press, 1970, p. 16.



will simply be one among many religions. It will be a religion and not *the* religion. Every great religion is *the* religion in its depth and a religion in its externals. This truth has to be clearly realised by the intellectuals and the common people to-day who have faith in religion and in the higher life of man. It will gradually bring people belonging to different faiths closer to each other and engender in them a deep sense of unity and fellow-feeling and will enable them to share together the joys and sorrows of life. This process has already started. We already see signs of this in the dialogues that are now taking place among the philosophers and thinkers of different religions and the willing participation of the people in the festivals and ceremonies of their fellow-men belonging to other faiths. This phenomenon has great significance and is of supreme importance for this country where all the great and living religions of the world live together as next-door neighbours. The developing sense of unity, love and fellow-feeling among the peoples of different faiths in this country is sure to bring them closer to each other. It will also promote the cause of human unity and world peace.

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**MANIFESTATION OF ĀNAND IN THIS WORLD**  
**AN ADVAITIC VINDICATION WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE**  
**TO VEDĀNTASIDDHĀNTAMUKTĀVALĪ.**

*R. R. Pandey*

Prakāśānanda, the author of *Vedāntasiddhāntamuktāvalī*, who is supposed to have lived about 1500 A. D. is an extremist in the Advaita Vedānta. He does not accept even the empirical status of the universe, which is atleast acceptable to most of the Advaitins. His fundamental thesis is *EKAJIVA-VĀDA*, i. e., there is but one jīva and the entire universe is but its imaginings and *DRṢṬI-SRṢṬI-VĀDA*, i. e., the existence of objects is nothing more than their perception. Prakāśānanda is through and through an ānandavādī and the reader cannot avoid the impression of the author of *VSM*<sup>1</sup> as if he is speaking from a mystic plane and has realised the bliss nature of the Absolute. In the following pages we shall discuss his views on the manifestation of Ānanda in the world.

There are two important views with regard to the nature of jīva. One view maintains jīva as the intelligence, which has avidyā as its adjunct and thus maintains jīva as all pervading. This view is the view of vivaraṇa school. On the other hand, according to the bhāmatī school jīva is though intelligence, its adjunct is the internal organ (antaḥ-karāṇa) and thus jīva is conceived to be limited. The Advaita epistemology puts forward the following three doctrines with regard to the cognition of object.

The Brahman-intelligence being the material cause of all things reveals them. But the jīva-intelligence which has avidyā as its adjunct, though all pervading is not the material cause of all things. Just as the generality, 'cowness', which is all pervading there is conjunction only with cow and not with horse etc, so

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1. *VSM* = *Vedānta-siddhānta-muktāvalī*.



also the individual intelligence, though all pervading, has its natural conjunction only with internal organ and not with objects. Since there is no conjunction of the jīva with objects, there is need of psychosis to bring about the conjunction. When the internal organ (antaḥ-karaṇa) goes out through eyes etc., to the objects and transforms itself into the form of these objects (vṛttis), then arises the cognition of the object. Just as the bare fire, which is incapable of burning even a blade of grass, burns when it is associated with a ball of iron, even so the jīva-intelligence, though unable to manifest objects, does so, when it is associated with the psychoses of the internal organ. This is the view of Vivaraṇa school<sup>1</sup>.

According to the Bhāmati school jīva is regarded limited because of its adjunct internal organ. Being unassociated with objects etc., it cannot manifest them. But when through psychoses, it identifies itself with the Brahman intelligence, which is the material cause of objects, it reveals them<sup>2</sup>.

Or else, the individual-intelligence though all pervading yet being veiled by avidyā, is not self-manifest and it reveals some particular object only when it overpowers the veil of avidyā with the association of vṛttis<sup>3</sup>. Thus the jīva depends on psychoses (vṛttis) either for bringing about the association of the object with intelligence, or for manifesting the non-difference of the jīva from the object, or for lifting the veil of ignorance that obscures the jīva-intelligence<sup>4</sup>.

According to the Vedānta-siddhānta-muktāvalīkāra as Brahman itself assumes the form of jīva through its own avidyā, and there is only one single jīva and the entire universe is its fabrication, the question of neither reflection (pratibimba) nor limitation (avaccheda) arises<sup>5</sup>. Thus in the system of Prakāśa-

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1. SLS (SLS=Siddhānta-leśa-saṅgraha) 1-62, pp. 143-144.

2. SLS 1-63, pp. 144-145.

3. SLS 1-64, pp. 145-146.

4. SLS 1-65, p. 146.

5. SLS 1-42.

nanda there remains no scope for a definite and distinct theory of epistemology. While for sṛṣṭi-dṛṣṭivādin the objective phenomena in themselves are, of course, but modifications of ajñāna but still these phenomena of the ajñāna are there as the common ground for the experience of all. This therefore has an objective epistemology whereas the dṛṣṭi-sṛṣṭi-vāda has no proper epistemology<sup>1</sup>.

We have just examined two main theories of Advaita-epistemology, the reflection theory of vivaraṇa school (pratibimba-vāda) and the limitation theory of bhāmātī school (avaccheda-vāda). On the issue of manifestation of Ānanda in this world, we find the same theories with their epistemological structure being discussed and the character of Ānanda in both the theories analysed. The first theory which is held by Advaitavidyā-cārva gives a solution to this issue by the example of reflection (pratibimba-vāda), while the second theory solves this problem by the idea of veilmant (āvaraṇa) of intelligence by ignorance. These theories are as follows:—

According to Advaitavidyācārya the individual-intelligence in man, the 'Witness' (sākṣin) is constituted by a reflection of the absolute intelligence of Brahman in the internal organ (antaḥ-karaṇa). Cognition of external objects is the result of the fact that the Brahman intelligence, which underlies the object reflects itself—together with the object superimposed on it—in the foremost part of a psychosis (vṛtti) of the internal organ which has reached the object and has assumed its shape. Thus by way of this reflected image the Brahman intelligence together with the object superimposed on it is united with the individual-intelligence, i e., with the 'Witness'<sup>2</sup>. Now as the intelligence aspect (caitanya) is reflected, in the same way, its bliss aspect (Ānanda) is also reflected, both aspects form an indivisible unity. As the image reflected in the internal organ, which

1. Dasgupta, A History Of Indian Philosophy, Vol. I, p. 478.

2. Cp. L. Schmithausen, Zur advaitischen Theorie der Objekterkenntnis WZKSO XII-XIII/1968, p. 353.



constitutes the individual soul, the bliss aspect of Brahman also becomes the bliss of the Witness (*sākṣyānanda*, SLS 201, 2f). As image of the Brahman intelligence that underlies the object, when this image is reflected in the psychosis of the internal organ (*antaḥkāraṇavṛtti*) aroused by this object, the bliss aspect of Brahman becomes 'bliss [related to an] object (*viṣayānanda*)' (SLS 201, 5f). The gradual diminution of its purity is explainable from the varying degree of impurity of the reflecting substance (201,6) just as when a face is reflected in various mirrors of varying degree of impurity (201, 1f). In the case of internal organ and its transformations, impurity consists in the prevailing of the quality 'tamas' (201, 5f). More or less good karma results in a contact with more or less far-reaching repressions of 'tamas' for the benefit of 'sattva' and thus a more or less perfect purity and blissfulness (*sukharūpatva*) of corresponding psychosis of the internal organ (201, 3-5). Thus on the basis of its metaphysical and epistemological presuppositions, this is able to explain the various shades of diminution or incompleteness from which suffers the experience of the bliss of Brahman in unemancipated living beings, without having to assume that the bliss of the Witness (*sākṣyānanda*) is veiled by nescience (202,2)<sup>1</sup>.

The second theory reproduced by Appayadikṣita does not make use of reflection (*pratibimba-vāda*) in order to explain limitation of the experience of bliss in the state of bondage. It rather avails itself of the idea of the spirit's being veiled or covered (*avarāṇa*) by nescience (SLS 205,1). It may, therefore, be taken to start from the presupposition that Brahman itself through nescience adhering to it, becomes *jīva*.<sup>2</sup> By nescience the true nature of this *jīva* (who in reality is brahman), although, in reality luminous and manifest by itself, is veiled (202,10-203,1). There is no contradiction in this, because the natural luminosity (*svārūpaprakāśa*) of the self is not sufficient to eliminate nescience (203,3). Nescience, however, covers the true nature of the *jīva* only in part. Intelligence (*caitanya*) is veiled only in so far

1. SLS 1-99, pp. 200-202.

2. Cp. Schmithausen, *Zur śvāitischen Theorie der Objekterkenntnis* — p. 355f.

as it does not function as the Witness (sākṣin 205,1) which in this theory probably has to be defined as intelligence illusorily limited by the internal organ (an'ah-karaṇopahitaṁ caitanyam).<sup>1</sup> On the other hand, the bliss aspect of the jīva (who in reality is identical with Brahman) is not only veiled in its universal aspect but also in so far as it is the nature of the jīva acting as 'Witness' (205,1). This is possible in spite of the fact that in reality intelligence and bliss form one indivisible unity; for nescience produces an imaginary difference between these two aspects (203,1f). Yet even being veiled of bliss may be cancelled, when a function or transformation of internal organ in the form of pleasure (sukha-rūpa vṛtti) arises, this transformation, as it were, isolating a bit of universal bliss and overpowering the veiling force of nescience—superseding it (āvaraṇābhibhava, 205,1-3). As this transformation of the internal organ is liable to variation in accordance with the variety of the causes by which it is conditioned, the overpowering of the veiling force of nescience effected by this transformation admits of various degrees, like the overwhelming of darkness at daybreak (205,3f). In this way, the fact is explained that in the state of bondage bliss becomes manifest only in the limited form of 'bliss aroused by objects', whereas bliss in its unlimited form which constitutes the true brahman-nature of the jīva, remains hidden. In this theory, there appears to be no room for the manifestation of the bliss of the 'Witness' (sākṣyānanda, p. 205,5), perhaps on account of that according to this theory the 'Witness' is—like jīva—not separate from the Brahman by a difference original and reflected image.<sup>2</sup>

Let us examine the position of P. in the light of these two theories. In the beginning of the Vedāntasiddhāntamuktāvalī, P. once asserts that only in the character of supreme bliss, the Self is an object of ignorance, while in its character of intelligence, it shines forth. The Self cannot be as intelligence an object for ignorance, for if this were possible, the existence of ignorance itself could not be proved (VSM p. 16, 5-7). But according to the

1. Schmithausen, cit. p. 338; SLS p. 190 ff.

2. SLS 1-100, pp. 202-205.



Advaitic tradition, the Self as supreme bliss is identical with intelligence. P. does admit this fact as absolute truth. He maintains that, though in reality the Self shines forth as self-luminous, absolute and blissful, a differentiation of it into parts is falsely imagined through ignorance, hence, the Self as supreme bliss is said to be an object of ignorance. It is due to this false knowledge that the Self is said to shine forth in its character of intelligence only and not in its character of bliss. But why is this knowledge false? Because, P. replies the Self in the very character of bliss does shine forth as the object of our highest love.<sup>1</sup>

First of all a very simple question arises, if the Self by nature is absolute bliss, why does it not appear in the consciousness of the individual in this world? It cannot be maintained that the appearance of Self in consciousness as the object of our highest love is, indeed, the presentation of (Self as) absolute bliss for in our consciousness (*abhimāna*) we do not feel so. And, moreover, no one is conscious of such bliss, which Veda describes to be the nature of Self in the state of liberation (*mokṣa*). And further, the manifestation of bliss, declares Śruti to take place only at the time of liberation in the passage: 'bliss is the form of Brahman that is fixed in liberation.' P.'s reply is this that, though the Self as bliss is manifest, yet we are not conscious of it in this world due to the hindrance existing here<sup>2</sup>. What is this hindrance? The hindrance or obstruction according to P. consists in inattention (*anavadhāna*) to the Self, and that too is not real. He observes: 'In this very world unobstructed bliss is manifest, and the obstruction is not real, but consists simply in inattention (*anavadhāna*) towards the Self; just as inattention makes one lose sight of the jewel round the neck. And this inattention pertains to him, who is overcome by the poison of sensuous objects, sounds and the rest, which fall in the manifold, which is wrought by nescience, and whose mind eagerly desires the sight of the Self, and whose heart is drawn

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1. VSM p. 18.

2. VSM p. 248, 9-10 ff.

away even while he beholds the Self, by the bait of sensuous objects awakened by the firm impressions and who finds no time to realise the Self most dear, the Lord of the universe, who as the web entering all things is very near to him. Now if we make a critical analysis of the text of VSM we find that P. does talk of hindrance or obstruction, which is responsible for the non-perception of one's real nature. But it is clear that this hindrance or obstruction is neither because of reflection (*pratibimba*) maintained by the Vivaraṇa School nor because of veilmant (*āvaraṇa*) maintained by Bhāmati School. But we know that P. is *dr̥ṣṭi-sr̥ṣṭi-vadin* par excellence. The entire universe is creation of the *jīva*'s perception, the manifold has no independent existence. It is rooted in the very perception of the *jīva*. In the philosophy of P. all duality is fictitious. It is not only duality which has been condemned by P. as non-entity (*tuccha*) but he condemns even the very *vision of duality* as a non-entity (*tuccha*). Here since duality and the vision of duality are sheer non-entity, it is all the more clearly established that no second, is known to the Self, which is absolute bliss, self-existent-intelligence and unrelated.<sup>1</sup> Finally, there is neither the duality nor the vision of duality and there remains only the Self in its real nature of existence, consciousness and bliss. As the Self is by nature self-luminous, it cannot be the object of ignorance. Still as bleary eyed owls fancy that the self-luminous sun at noon is enveloped in darkness, so the grossly ignorant imagine that the Self is concealed by the nescience. Hence, all Upaniṣads start to destroy the nescience<sup>2</sup>.

On the point of absolute unreality of the world P. is very much emphatic. As already observed he is not prepared even to accept the *vivarta* status of the world. He observes: For the uninitiated it is taught that the whole world is this *vivarta* of Brahman. The wise hold it to be bliss unmodified.<sup>3</sup> If so then what is the utility of Śruti and its prescribed discipline?

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1. VSM p. 283.

2. VSM pp. 106-107.

3. VSM 67, p. 27.



To this P.'s answer is that the aim of Śruti and its prescribed discipline is simply to remove the false idea about the world. 'Knowledge effected through vedic sentences destroys that error termed the world, which has already been destroyed by eternal knowledge. Just as Arjuna slays again the Kuru race already slain by Vāsudeva.<sup>1</sup> P. simply exclaims why after all there is still duality ! Quoting a verse from the Saṃkṣepaśāstraka he exclaims : Strange it is how even now duality appears before me in that eternal, unrelated, blessed, luminous Self. Duality existed once—can I say this ? what ! was not the eternal Veda existing then, that duality was wrought by nescienc.<sup>2</sup>

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1. VSM 68 p. 278.

2. VSM 70 p. 288.

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